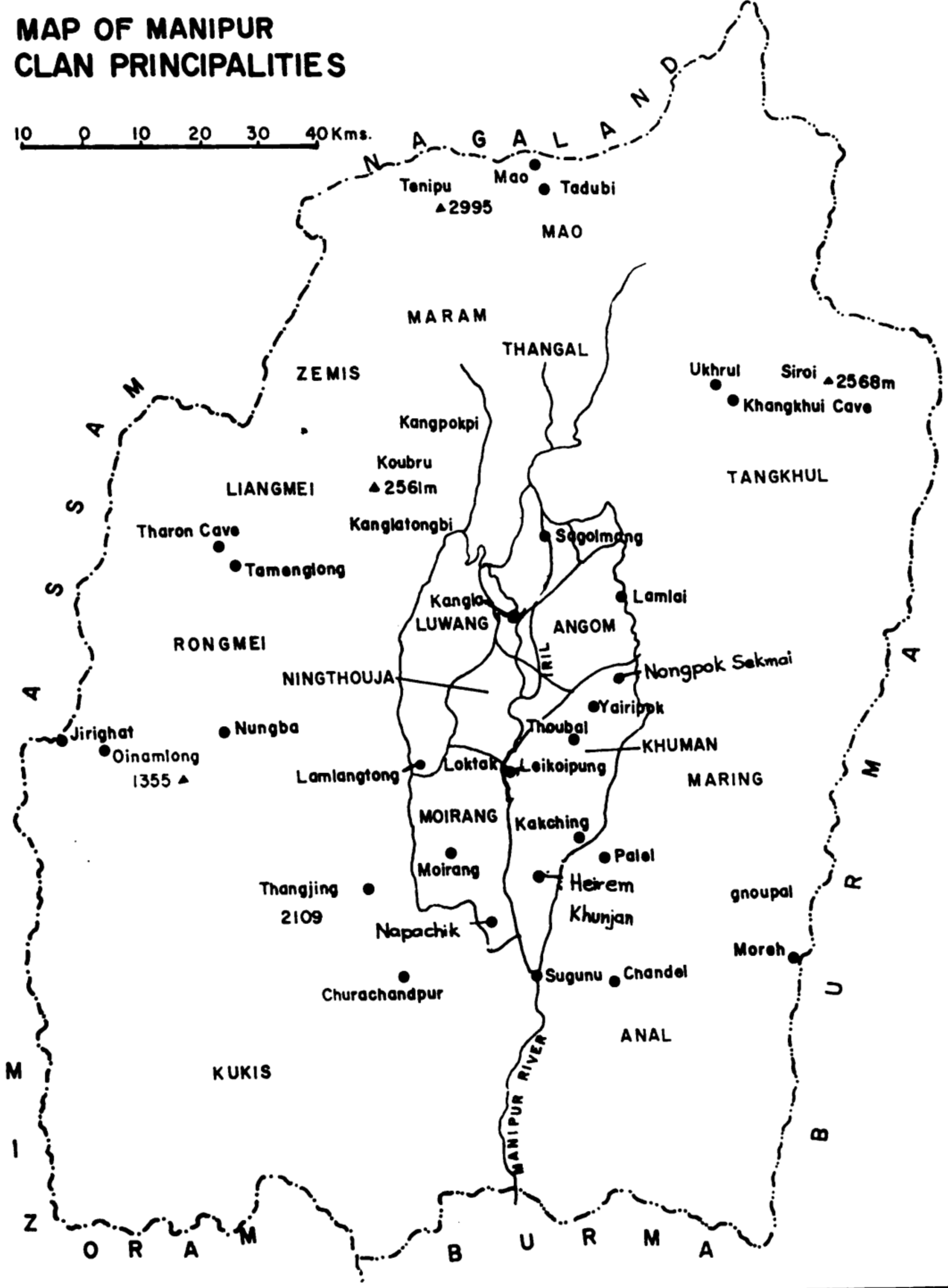


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History of Manipur

VOLUME I
Pre-colonial Period

GANGMUMEI KABUI



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NATIONAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

23, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002 (India)

Branches:

Chaura Rasta, Jaipur

34, Netaji Subhash Marg, Allahabad

© Gangmumei Kabui

First Published: 1991

ISBN: 81-214-0362-6

Printed in India at Saraswati Printing Press, A-95, Sector V, NOIDA-201301, Laser typeset at A4 Printographics, New Delhi-110001 and Published by National Publishing House, 23, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002.

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P2 480-SA

11-2-92

To

Maharaj Kumar Priya Brata Singh

a soldier, statesman, humanist and intellectual of Manipur

Preface

The *History of Manipur* is the story of the evolution of the culture and society of a remarkable people who built up their cradle of civilization in Manipur valley amidst the mountain ranges that divide India and Burma. The beautiful valley of Imphal which is situated on the trade and migration route between South Asia and South East Asia was a valley of cultural assimilation of the varied people who came to this hilly country in search of land, fortune, better living and glory. The author does not entertain any claim to the originality of the informations which are analysed and presented in this work. This work is indicative of the current state of research and investigation on the history of ancient and medieval Manipur. The author has made an humble attempt to reconstruct the history of the beautiful country inhabited by various ethnic groups from the very early times by utilizing the archaeological evidences, literary and historical sources. I wonder whether this historical methodology has been successful in presenting a rational history of the period. I have tried to cull the history from the myriad of myths, legends, traditions and semi historical texts in the reconstruction of the history of Manipur. I have also tried to separate the myth and sentiment from the historical and real events. However, despite the ideal inspired by the famous German poet Goethe that the historian's duty is to separate the truth from the false, the certain from the uncertain, it is a difficult task to apply this eternal dictum. It must be confessed that the present work is my response to the challenge of teaching and research on the regional history of Manipur and North East India in the Jawaharlal Nehru University and Manipur University. I have taken the help of a large number of scholars in the preparation of this work. And I wish to thank everyone of them. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Romila Thapar who made a significant decision in the introduction of History of Manipur in the Post Graduate courses in

History in JNU Centre, Imphal. However, it was Professor Amalendu Guha who suggested that I should write a history of Manipur. I am grateful to him.

History of Manipur Vol. I deals with the ancient and medieval period or the pre-colonial period. Vol. II deals with modern period from 1826 to the 20th century. Vol. III deals with the social and cultural history covering all the ethnic groups of the kingdom.

I am thankful to Dr. Lal Dena, Associate Professor, Dr. N. Joy Kumar Singh, Associate Professor and my colleagues Dr. M. Jitendra Singh, Associate Professor in the Department of History, Manipur University who gave me great assistance in the preparation of this small work. I owe a lot to Shri N. Khelchandra Singh, the most authentic scholar of Manipur's past history and literature, from whom I got historical materials.

I used to discuss many aspects of history with Professor B.K. Roy Burman, a distinguished scholar and anthropologist with a deep insight into the historical interpretation of the past events in the global and universal perspective. My interactions with him greatly helped me in formulating my ideas on historical ecology, ethno-history, socio-cultural formation, state formation process and identity formation and identity expansion in Manipur, North East India and South East Asia. I am grateful to him.

I also utilize the services of my students who are research scholars in the Department of History, specially, Dr. L. Basanti Devi, Ksh. Shyamkanhai Singh and Dr. N. Pramodini Devi in this work. I got assistance from Dr. P. Nabachandra Singh, Assistant Professor in Manipuri Language and Literature for interpreting archaic Meitei words of the chronicles. I would like to thank Dr. S. Tomba Singh, Associate Professor of Manipuri Language and Literature and Shri S. Bhagya Singh of S. R. Institute of Manipuri Studies for allowing me to use the excellent papers of the seminars conducted by the Institute. I also thank my friend B. Kullachandra Sharma for making several historical manuscripts available to me. I am grateful to Prof. Arambam Lokendra, a perceptive scholar with whom I had the privilege of close interaction on the evolution of Meitei society and culture.

I have to say that the chapter 1, Introductory: Land and People is a modified version of my paper Glimpses in the Land and People of Ancient Manipur included in Dr. N. Sanajaoba (Ed.) *Manipur: Past and Present*. I would like to thank Principal M. Ibotombi Singh of Moirang College and his brother for the help given on the history of Moirang.

I also thank my esteemed colleague, Professor S.N. Pandey who gave a great encouragement and inspiration by making frequent queries

about the progress of the book. I am grateful to all learned colleagues of History Department for providing me the necessary academic climate and circumstances for me, Professor L.B. Verma, Dr. G.P. Singh, Dr. D.N. Asopa, K.K. Das, Dr. S. Irene, N. Lokendra Singh who interacted with me on several occasions. I had the opportunity of discussing the problems of methodology and historical interpretation with Prof. Verma whose sharp mind and deep knowledge of history as a discipline have been of great benefit to me.

I would like to mention the critical observations made by Maharaj Kumar Priya Brata Singh on different aspects of history and culture of Manipur. It is because of his abiding love for the culture and history of the people of Manipur that I have dedicated this work to him as a token of love, respect and appreciation.

I must thank Prof. K.J. Mahale, Vice Chancellor of Manipur University, a profound scholar of genuine humanism and an educationist of rare quality and lover of knowledge who encourages his colleagues to widen the frontier of knowledge.

I have to acknowledge the great help given by Miss Thambalsana Kamei, Librarian of State Central Library in making any books I required available to me at any time which went a long way in completing this work.

I must thank Ch. Radheshyam Singh, Deputy Librarian of Manipur University Library and staff including R.K. Budhi Singh and Shyamo Singh. I acknowledge the assistance I received from the authorities of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, National Library, Calcutta, National Archive, Ratan Tata Library, Delhi School of Economics, JNU Library, Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi, Vishva Bharati and Gauhati University Libraries.

I am also grateful to my wife and members of my family who shared with me the ups and downs of an academician and social activist like me.

I must thank Editor Noyal Joseph, for his painstaking editorial works which have gone a long way in presenting this book in the present form. It was a pleasure to work with a bright and young editor, Noyal Joseph.

I thank L. Rabindranath Sharma and L. Bikram Singh, of Manipur University who took the trouble of typing my manuscripts. I also thank M. Lalgurung of my office for his devoted works. Then my thanks goes to S.N. Mallick of National Publishing House, Delhi for his kindly agreeing to publish this work.

Manipur University.
September 18, 1989

GANGMUMEI KABUI

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1

Introductory: The Land and People

Name of Manipur

Manipur was an ancient kingdom which had enjoyed the fortune and glory and experienced sorrow and vicissitudes of her long history. Manipur is a cradle of human civilisation and creativity which has come under the influence of many cultures of many different ethnic groups who came at various times and contributed to the growth of the civilisation in this hilly state in India's north eastern frontier. Manipur, being a gateway of India to South East Asia, was influenced by her geographic situation and ecology in the shaping of her history and cultural development.

Manipur literally means the city or the land of gems. According to Manipuri historical work, Sanamahi Laikan, the name Manipur was first officially introduced in the early eighteenth century during the reign of Hinduised Garibaniwaza (1709-48)¹. "Mekhala" was another name of the kingdom as indicated by a coin of the same king describing him as "Mekhaleswar", Lord of Mekhala or Mekhale.² This name did not occur in the pre-Hindu literatures, specially the chronicles of the kingdom.³ Her indigenous names are Kangleipak, Poireipak and Meitrabak.⁴

In the legendary or proto historical period, the principality which centred at Kangla, the capital of the later Meitei kingdom was known by several names which are referred to in both historical and literary works.⁵ However, this land and her people were known by different names to her neighbours, the Shans or Pongs of Upper Burma with

whom she had political and cultural contacts called her Cassay, the Burmese, another eastern neighbour and rival power called her Kathe, perhaps derived from Cassay (Manipuris settled in Burma were known as Ponna), the Assamese name for Manipur and her inhabitants was Meklee.⁶ In the first recorded treaty between East India Company and Jai Singh, Raja of Manipur in 1762, the kingdom was recorded as Meckley.⁷ It was shown as Meckley by a British cartographer of the eighteenth century in Rennell's Memoir and Map of India. But the coins issued by Raja Jai Singh and his successors adopted the title of 'Manipureshwar', the Lord of Manipur⁸ while Meckley was discarded. Thus as a direct consequence of Sanskritisation, these three names, Mekhala, Meckley and Manipur were used as the names of the kingdom in the eighteenth century. Later on, a Sanskrit work, Dharni Samhita which was written in the reign of Gambhir Singh (1825-34) popularised the legends of the derivation of Mekhala and Manipur.⁹ It mentions the legend of Siva-Parvati-Ananta according to which Siva and Parvati performed the Ras Leela in Manipur after draining away the water in the valley through a tunnel made by Siva's trident (trisula). Ananta, the serpent god was overjoyed and took out the gems from his hood and sprinkled the land with sparkling gems; hence, Manipur, (Mani = gem, pur = city or land). Another legend built around Siva was that the dead body of Siva's consort Sati, supposed to be a former incarnate of Parvati was cut into pieces by the chakra of Lord Vishnu and the torso of Sati with Mekhala (female wrapper) fell down in the land, thus Mekhaladesh (land of the Mekhala).¹⁰ These were myths created and popularised by the Brahmin scholars to give puranic derivation of 'Manipur'. Vijoy Panchali, a nineteenth century history of Manipur says that the land was called Aranya Nagar, Mahendranagar, Mekhaladesh and finally Manipur.¹¹

Manipur of the Mahabharata ?

Reference has been made to a kingdom named Manipur in the great Indian epic, Mahabharata (Adi and Asvamedha Parvans) while describing the adventures of the Pandava hero Arjuna who married to Chitrangada, a princess of Manipur, who gave birth to Babhruvahana who became the king of Manipur.

The royal family of Manipur after conversion into Hinduism claimed descent from the son of Arjuna and preceding him, many hoary puranic figures as indicated by the royal geneology prepared after

Hinduisation. But there was no mention of Babhruvahna or Arjuna in the pre-Garibaniwaz chronicles and geneologies of the royal family which was founded by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. Manipur's alleged Aryan connection should be viewed as an aspect of Sankritisation and an attempt to gain respectability in the Hindu world, specially among the royal families of India which was the normal practice of all converted ruling families either Hindus or Buddhists, in North East India and South East Asia. As S.K. Chatterjee has rightly observed, "The legend of Arjuna and Chitrangada which is very well known in India, became, one might say, the pivot for linking up Manipur with Brahmanical Purana Tradition."¹² Apart from the concocted royal geneology, serious attempt was made to imbibe this tradition in the popular mind of the people. It may be mentioned that the Aswamedha Parva of the Mahabharata rendered in Bengali by Gangadas Sen was translated into Manipuri and entitled "Langoi Shagol Thouba" and sung in a ballad form.¹³

While the Aryan origin of Manipur's royal family and their Hindu subjects is now an exploded myth, the identification of this ancient land with Manipur of the Mahabharata (both of Vyasa and Jaimini's Asvamedha) and Bhavisya Purana is a controversial issue and draws the attention of several eminent scholars. What has been narrated in the epic is not necessarily historical but the mention of Manipur in these works may be a reflection of the expanding horizon of the geographical knowledge among the Sanskrit writers. The scholars of Brahmanical school in Manipur, backed up by the royal court and later on by the orthodox but powerful ruling class had written volumes in support of the identification of Manipur with that of the epic, the doyen of the scholars being the great Sanskrit scholar Atombapu Sharma.¹⁴ A group of Indian and English scholars did not support the view but located Manipur in or around Kalinga in Orissa.¹⁵ A determined group of non-Brahmanical Meitei scholars forcefully and convincingly argue that Manipur cannot be identified with Mahabharata's Manipur. Their view is that only in the eighteenth century, Hinduisation had brought this name. The original name of the kingdom is Kangleipak.¹⁶

Mahabharata refers to the visits of Arjuna to Manipur. During his self exile, in the course of his wanderings in eastern India, Arjuna visited Anga (Bihar), Vanga (Bengal), Kalinga (Orissa) and travelled along the Mahendra mountain and reached Manipur going along the sea coast. He married Chitrangada, daughter of king Chitravahana. He stayed for three years during which a son named Babhruvahana was

born. Arjuna left Manipur for South India in course of which, he rescued five apsaras, celestial nymphs from their form of crocodiles. Arjuna returned to Manipur and saw his son now enthroned as the king after the expiry of his grandfather king Chitravahana. Then he left for Dwarka. After the great battle of Kurukshetra he visited Manipur during his military campaign of the Horse Sacrifice (Aswamedha) of his brother Emperor Yudhisthira. There was a provoked battle between Arjuna and Babhruvahana in which the father was killed by his son but, the father was revived and they were later on reunited. And Babhruvahana and his mother Chitrangada went to Hastinapur and attended the Aswamedha sacrifice.

There are two versions of Aswamedha Parvan of the Mahabharata : Vyasa's Mahabharata and Jaimini's Aswamedha, a surviving extract. Aswamedha Parvan of Vyasa's Mahabharata narrates that Arjuna's expeditionary forces defeated the king of Trigarta (modern Jullundur in Punjab), then invaded Pragjyotisa (Kamarup of Assam) and defeated its king Vajradatta, son of Bhagadatta who was killed in the battle of Kurukshetra, Arjuna invaded Sindhu, the kingdom of Jayadratha and accepted submission of his widow Duhshala with her grandson. Then he came to Manipur and fought a fierce battle against his son, after having reconciled with Babhruvahana, he invaded Rajgriha, capital of Magadha in Bihar, then Vanga, Pundra, Kerala territories along the coast, Cedi, Kasi, Kosala, Kirata, Tangana, Dasarna (whose ruler was named Chitrangada) Nisada, Dravida, Andhra, Raudra, Maihisika, Kollaguri, Gokarna Prohasa, Dwarka, Pancanada and Gandhara.¹⁷

The earlier two visits to Manipur show that the kingdom was located near Kalinga and Mahendra mountain and near the sea. But the present Manipur valley situated amidst the great mountain ranges which are a part of the eastern Himalayas forming the great divide between India and Burma is very far away from Kalinga and the sea.

Jaimini's Aswamedha¹⁸ gives a different version of the itinerary of Arjuna's military campaign. Arjuna invaded Mahismati, went to Vindhya mountain, Campakapuri, Bhayanaka country, Strirajya, the land of women ruler, Vrksa country where the trees had men, women, cattle and elephants in place of fruits, and then various regions where men had long ears which served as covers for their body, many eyes, feet, horse and donkey's head, then to capital of Bhisana; after this Manipur, the capital of Babhruvahana. After the defeat of Arjuna, Krsna, Kunti and Bhima came to Manipur and spent five nights there. Then Arjuna followed the horse to the land of Mayurdhwaja,

Swaraswatipuri ruled by the king Vira Varman, Kuntalaka, then to the sea and to Sindhu, the land of Jayadratha.

One notices the absence of geographical contiguity in the itinerary of Arjuna's expeditionary forces which was the result of interpolation by the compilers of the great epic. The kingdoms and sites mentioned in Vyasa's Mahabharata and Jaimini's Aswamedha except a few, are quite different. Therefore, a rational interpretation of the geographical location of the places visited or conquered by Arjuna given in the two versions mentioned above, reinforced by the absence of any evidence of Arjuna's connection with this land in the pre-Hindu chronicles of Manipur, does not lead to the identification of Babhruvahana's kingdom with the present state of Manipur.

Even R.C. Majumdar, a great exponent of Aryanization thinks that all the references made in epic and other Sanskrit literatures, to places and peoples in eastern India are reflection of the process of Aryanisation and observes the following "As regards Manipur, its identification with the present state of Manipur has been rejected by many scholars ... Arjuna first proceeded to Mahendra mountains (*i.e.*, Eastern Ghat) in Kalinga and then proceeded to Manipur on the sea. This evidently locates Manipur in the Orissa Coast, a view taken by a number of scholars."¹⁹

It must be noted that Manipur is mentioned along with neighbouring kingdoms of north east in the Brahma Khanda of Bhavisya Purana: "Varendra — Tamralipti ca Hedamba — Manipurakam Lauhityas Tripuram Caiva Jayantakhyam Susangakam". This was rendered by S.K. Chatterjee as follows:

"Varendra (north central Bengal), Tamralipta (south east Bengal) Hidimba (the Kachari Kingdom: Dimapur) Manipura, the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra tract: Assam proper) the Tripura country, the land named Jayanta (Jaintia country) and Sushanga (= North Maimansingh, Susang: (Durgapur, the seat of formerly powerful Brahman, Lord of the Marches' from the thirteenth century, still inhabited by the Haijangs, a Bengalised Garo or Bodo tribe)."²⁰

Basing on the foundation of Sushanga state by a Brahmin from Kanauj, named Someswar Pathak in the end of the thirteenth century, it is hinted that Bhavisya Purana, perhaps was compiled in the fourteenth century. Chatterjee opines, "By that time the Meitei state had got its Sanskrit name of Manipura,"²¹ thus proposing a new theory that Manipur was a Sanskrit name used by Indian Sanskrit scholars. But since the fourteenth century, we have fairly a reliable chronicle with chronology which does not indicate any such name.

Manipur in Ptolemy's Geography

Ptolemy, a Greek astronomer and geographer of Alexandria in his *Geography of Further India* (circa 140 A.D.) has referred to a number of places, cities and tribes in North East India and Burma.²² His references are vague and identification of these toponyms and ethnonyms is by no means easy. G.R. Gerini made an elaborate attempt at such an identification. For instance, Kirhadia of Ptolemy is identified with the land of the Kiratas²³ the Indo-Mongoloid tribes covering Meghalaya, the Barak and Surma valleys and Tripura where the best malabathrum (tezpat) was available²⁴ One may naturally include the western hills of Manipur which are inhabited by the said group of tribes where tezpat is available in plenty.

Ptolemy mentions three principalities, viz., Tugma, Triglypton and Mreura. Tugma has been identified with Tammu, a former Shan principality, now a small township in the Kabaw valley of Upper Burma²⁵ which became a part of Manipur in the fifteenth century. But Gerini's further surmises that it might be a city of Manipur or Kachar is redundant and unnecessary. Triglypton is located by Gerini in Kale, another principality in the Chindwin basin south of Tammu or in Upper Kuladham in Chin Hills while Yule located it in Tripura.²⁶ With regard to Mreura, Gerini tried to identify it with the legendary principality of the Sakya clan of Moriya, supposed to have flourished in the Kabaw valley as referred to in the Burmese chronicles.²⁷ But P.C. Choudhury identifies Mreura with Manipur²⁸ perhaps because of its proximity to Tammu and Kale. His identification lacks convincing justification. Temala or Tamala of Ptolemy which is identified by the Gerini with Timira of the Ramayana has been located by him in the Arakan Yoma with Bassein and Cape Negrais.²⁹ Recently Ch. Budhi Singh tries to identify Timira of the Ramayana (Temala or Tamala of Ptolemy) with the land of the Meites. Meitei or Timei (annagrammatised from Meitei) of Manipur on the basis of Timira being a land abundant in gold and where there was silk worm rearing.³⁰ This problem will be discussed further in the subsequent paragraphs. But as Ch. Budhi Singh himself has stated, the Meiteis are not silk breeders, their art was learnt by them from the Chinese at a later period, it will be difficult to make such an identification. According to Ptolemy, Temala was a port city and not an internal country. However, despite the difficulty to identify Manipur with any of the toponyms or ethnonyms of Ptolemy, it

is very likely that this land was known to the Greek geographer and the Greek and Roman traders from whom he gathered his informations, as there was already a caravan trade between China and the Roman empire by land route through Upper Burma, Manipur, India and Afghanistan (at that time, part of the Kushan empire) by the first and second centuries of the Christian era.

Geographical Setting and Historical Ecology

Historical ecology means the changes and transformation in the ecosystem of a geographical region or a biosphere over a length of time or centuries. Historical ecology deals with time and space. It includes the human and social environment, man's continuous communion with nature and the environment. It is also concerned with the geographical and tectonic history of an ecosystem, its geographical features like mountain and river system and forests in terms of their classification and typology and man's encroachment on the ecosystem for fulfilling his needs for survival and to be prosperous by exploiting the environment for which men built up social, economic and political structures.

Manipur is a country of blue mountains and green valleys. Her natural beauty has inspired her poets and bards to praise her glory.³¹ Manipur is situated at the eastern frontier of India, on a branch of the eastern Himalayas which protrude towards the south along the Indo-Burma border. Manipur's long march in her historical development from a small clan principality at Kangla in the heart of Imphal to a powerful kingdom comprising the surrounding hills and territories in the Chindwin basin is reflected in the expanding geographical horizon of her territory. R.B. Pemberton wrote, "Manipur's size extended or contracted according to the fluctuating fortunes and powers of her monarchs."³² The present boundary of Manipur with an area of 22327 sq. km. more or less remained fixed since the controversial transfer of Kabaw valley to Burma in 1834. She is bounded in the north by Nagaland, in the east and the south, by Burma, in the south-west by Mizoram and in the west by Assam.³³

Manipur is geographically divided into the hills and the centrally situated valley. The Manipur valley is a cradle of human civilisation and Alfred Lyall rightly describes it as "an oasis of comparative civilisation amidst the barbarians."³⁴ The valley is oval shaped, 790

mtr. above sea level and surrounded by the hills in all sides. This geographic division is a determinant factor in the socio-political historical development of the land. The valley inhabited by the Meiteis is one-tenth of the total area of the state, her dense population, highly fertile land, advanced technology and better social and economic organisations led to the growth of kingdom while in the hills, the political systems could not develop beyond the village society or republics. The stiff mountain ranges and the narrow river valleys which provide secure habitat with enough sustenance to the pre-historic people are not conducive to the growth of state systems. The mountains are divided into western hills comprising the Koubru-Laimaton; Makui Longdi, Kala Naga and Vangai ranges which are the southern branches of the great Barail, while the eastern hills comprising the Sirohi and Mapithel and Yamodoung ranges are the branches of the Patkai mountain on Indo-Burma border. These enormous hill ranges appear to be insurmountable barriers for isolation; but in reality, the tracks through these ranges are the routes for both trade and human migration for the little known men of the Indo-Mongoloid race, the dark Negrito and Dravidian and the tall and fair complexioned Caucasoids who trickled into this land in search of land for habitat and livelihood, for wealth, power and glory from the pre-historic times down to the present century. The important mountain peaks are the Mt. Essau or Tenipu, the Sirohi peak in the east and Koubru peak in the west.³⁵

Geological formation

The geological and tectonic history of Manipur can be understood as a part of the geological evolution of North East India as an unit. The region includes the Himalayas of Arunachal Pradesh and its branches along the Indo-Burma border in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and plateau of Meghalaya and the river valleys in the region. This region has the oldest crystalline rocks of the Meghalaya plateau to the youngest alluvium. It is presumed by the geologists³⁶ that there existed a shallow sea called the Tethys which provided a geosynclinal environment in this part of the world during the lower Paleozoic and Mesozoic periods. However, the Shillong plateau of Meghalaya remained a land mass since the precambrian times. "The Tethys continued to receive sediments eroded from the Archæan rocks during Paleozoic and Mesozoic periods.

“During the Cretaceous period (60 to 110 m.y.) the North East India underwent orogenic movement caused by geodynamic forces. The long accumulated sediments on the floor of the Tethys were deformed as ridges and basins. This caused the appearance of land on the one hand and deepening of parts of the Tethys on the other...The orogenic earth movements producing tectonic highlights, ridges and basin were followed by periods of quiescence, prolonged erosion and deposition of an enormous scale — sediments were deposited shrinking geosynclinal shelf or newly formed lakes and lagoons.” It has been pointed out that the oldest rocks found in eastern Manipur belong to Cretaceous group, including shales, slates, siltstones and quartzite. This area experienced serpentine rocks. And the serpentine rocks are younger than Cretaceous. The limestones of Cretaceous occur near Ukhrul and Hundung. The rock types in this area are shales, mudstone and sandstones of the Disang series.

It is said that “the stratigraphy of Manipur is better understood from Eocene period (40 to 60 m.y.). The Cretaceous formations are overlain by Lower Tertiary formations belonging to Eocene period. In Chandel district, the sedimentary rocks to the west and north west of the region belong to Disang series. The Disang and Jaintia series are overlain by the Barail series belonging to Oligocene period. These sedimentary rocks form the Barail range. The Barail series occupy a large part of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. The Barail series is exposed in the Jaintia range of North Cachar and extends to Kohima cyclone. The Barail series consists of sandstone, siltstone, mudstone and conglomerate. The Barail cover considerable tracts of Manipur west and Manipur north. In Tamenglong area, the rock type are the shale sand stones of the Barail series.”³⁷

The formation of the central plain of Imphal, according to E.W. Dun, was due to a stream being blocked by some convulsion of nature.³⁸ The popular notion is that the plain was formed as a result of a lake being filled up by river borne sediments. But the geologists explain that the Imphal plain was formed due to the ‘uplift’ in the southern mountain which led to the reversal of the drainage system and impounding of water in the area where we have the lakes and swamps.³⁹

Manipur is endowed with a large number of rivers and streams which traverse her mountains and valleys. The rivers of Manipur except the Leimatak flow from the north to the south. The Barak, the longest and largest river, starting from a point of northern hills flow

into western and southern hills, then to the Cachar and the Surma valleys of Bangladesh. The Irang and the Makru of the Tamenglong area flow into the great Barak. The Imphal or Manipur river (Minno of Ptolemy) traverses the valley of Manipur, starting from the hills to the north of valley flows into Chin hills and to the Chindwin in Burma. The Imphal, the Iril, the Thoubal, the Nambol rivers which run across the valley provide the ecological environment for the Meitei civilisation. These rivers and the fertile banks provide livelihood to the people who live in their watershed systems, though during the rains, they turn into devastating demons of devouring floods and bring forth the alluvial soil enriching the fertility of the land. The Barak and the Jiri rivers in the west are navigable for a pretty long course. The Imphal river has a long mileage of navigation.

Manipur has a large number of lakes which have greatly reduced during the past one century. The Loktak lake is the biggest fresh water lake on whose banks grew up the principalities of the Moirang and the Khumans. In the hills, in the west bank of the Barak off the Falls are a group of lakes known as the Zeilad. These lakes, river, streams and mountain peaks are interwoven in the life, culture and traditions of the people. Whoever occupying the fertile river basin are the wielders of economic power and ultimately controlled the state system.

Forests

The climate with its variations according to altitude is very healthy and the rainfall is between seventy four to one hundred inches a year. The hills of Manipur are covered with rich forests; once upon a time, the valley was also covered with forests and swamps; now it is all denuded. The forests for centuries provided sustenance for the people. The principality which had control or access to forests in the hills built up a strong government and they endured more than other which did not have such an advantage. The forests provide cultivation fields to the hill cultivator, wood, bamboo and grass for construction of houses, and daily means of livelihood. They are also hunting ground of the animals. However, over the ages, particularly since the commercialisation of forests during the colonial period, the forests have fallen prey to the axe of the shifting cultivators and the avarice of the commercial extractors which have denuded the forests of Manipur.

The entire forests of Manipur are included in the Himalayan system. Altitude is the potent ecological factor in classifying the various

vegetational zones of a region, namely, (i) sub-montane zone, (ii) montane or temperate zone, (iii) sub-alpine and (iv) alpine.

S.C. Sinha classifies forests of Manipur in the three major groups *i.e.*, Tropical Montaine, sub-tropical, Montaine Temperate.⁴⁰ The forests of Manipur are great natural resources of the region. R.B. Pemberton, (1835) in the early nineteenth century was amazed by the richness of the Manipur forests. He writes, "I know no spot in India in which the products of the forests are so varied and magnificent but their utility is entirely local, as the nature of the country precludes the possibility of transporting to foreign markets... The valley itself is practically free of forests although every village is surrounded by a grove of forest trees."⁴¹

Half a century later, E.W. Dun (1886) saw almost the same plentiful forests. He also noticed the effects of the climatic change on forests, agricultural practices, village settlement pattern and housing technology. He writes, "The climate at once rainy and temperate cover the hills in the western portion with thick forests and induces the inhabitants to grow rice, causes numerous rivers, streams and marshes, and encourage aquatic and water loving plants. Forest in the east is not thick as in the west. Oak replaces bamboo, firs for Nageshwar, a drier climate produced a lighter and different kind of jungle. The villages in the valley are situated on the banks of the river or edge of the lakes so that every household has some water near it."⁴²

Flora: Migration and settlement

F. Kingdom Ward, the famous plant hunter has stated that Manipur is a part of the monsoon belt of South East Asia and naturally is included in the same ecosystem of the forests of the region.⁴³ He points out that the flora of Manipur has been identified with the flora of Assam hills. He writes, "Some ten thousand years ago, the climate of Manipur, as of all eastern India was far more colder than it is today. The vegetation must have been different; and no less so the forest. Another result of the constant wear and tear on the earth's crust of the heaving and squeezing, uplifting and sagging of the rocks is not only the gradual isolation of areas-mountain tops for example, but also the building of new line of communication between areas long divorced."⁴⁴ According to this hypothesis, ten thousand years ago the flora of the whole northern hemisphere was still struggling in the grip of the ice age during which the Himalayas were heavily iced and glaciers were

formed. This led to the migration of the northern flora to the south. Luckier plants went down to the plains and survived. Manipur has many evidences of glaciation on Sirohi and Koubu ranges. Manipur during the ice age was ringed by ice. Manipur must have been sterile at the time of maximum glaciation. And when the Sino-Himalayan ice cap vanished, the flora of Manipur was isolated on the tops of the mountains. According to Ward, "for long ages Manipur was almost completely sterilized. The problem was simple, it had no flora at all. It had been driven out by the cold. As the climate improved plant refugees began to return to their old homes from the warm south from the deep valleys and plains. These established themselves, multiplied until Manipur became a part of Indo-Malaysia flora whence the bulk of its new population was derived... In fact the position of Manipur in the midst of glaciated mountains and astride one of the glaciated escape routes was peculiarly favourable for receiving contribution of flora from all directions."⁴⁵

Of the various flora mention should be made of the valuable trees like the teak on the Burmese border, the extraction of which was one of the causes of frequent conflicts between Manipur and Burma in the past, the Khasia pine available in the north east, the bamboo forests of the west, the agar which is one of the international trade commodities. The tea plants are available in the wild; in the nineteenth century and in early twentieth century, Manipur tea seeds were in great demand in Assam tea plantations. The most distinguished flora is the famous Sirohi lily (*Lilium Macklennia* named after the maiden name of the wife of its discoverer Kingdom F. Ward)⁴⁶ Of the fauna, the Indian hornbill and rarest of them all, the brow antlered deer known as the Sangai are worth mentioning.

Manipur on the Trade and Migration Route

Manipur is one of the routes between South Asia and South East Asia and Central Asia. Various ethnic groups belonging to southern Mongoloid group, the Tibeto-Burmans, the Indo-Aryans and a sizeable section of Tai (Shans) came to Manipur from pre-historic times down to the present day. The present ethnic groups of Manipur, viz., the Meiteis, the Naga tribes, the Kuki Chin tribes and other Indian communities are the descendants of those migrating people. And Manipur and its central valley provided the ecological setting for building up a civilization. These migrating people brought with them

varying degrees of technology ranging from the Old Stone Age roughstone tools to more refined neolithic and potters. With the coming of metal tools mostly bronze, copper and tin during the historical period from Thailand and Upper Burma cultural zone, the metal civilisation of Manipur was developed mostly through the trade.

According to a Chinese historian Ssu-ma-Chien (100 B.C.) Emperor Wu-Ti of Chuan Yuan period (140-134 B.C.) despatched a Chinese envoy named Chang Chien to Central Asia to establish a military alliance with Yue Chih tribes against the Huns who gave trouble to western borderland of China. The ambassador came to Ta-Hsia (Bactria) in Afghanistan in 127 B.C. To his great surprise, Chang Chien saw "clothes and bamboo" (probably Chinese silk and bamboo products) in the local markets. On enquiry he was told that these merchandise came from Ssu-Chuan and another country of southern China (Yunan). These articles were purchased by merchants of Ta Hsia in India and they were brought to eastern India through Yunan and across northern India to Bactria.⁴⁷ Two centuries later, the history of later Han (Hou Han Shu) records that there was trade between China and India whose products were "elephants, rhinoceros, tortoise, shell, gold, silver, copper, lead and tin." It further records that China was in contact both commercial and diplomatic with Ta-Tsin (the Roman province of Syria) through the central Asian route during the reign of Emperor Ho (A.D. 89-105). After a temporary disruption of this route due to the revolts of the people along it— the trade and diplomatic contact— this annal records the arrival in China in A.D. 120 of Ta Tsin of acrobats capable of working charms, breathing fire, knotting and unknotting their limbs unaided, interchanging the heads of cows and horses and dancing while juggling with a thousand balls. This gift was brought to the court of China by an ambassador from the land of Chan on the Burmese frontier (a Shan state according to P.M. Bagchi) and the petty king of this country was probably expressing in this way his desires for the continuance of trade with his powerful neighbour to the north. He afterwards resold the Chinese products including silk to his Indian neighbours.⁴⁸

This trade intercourse was maintained through land routes across the mountain ranges between eastern India and upper Burma, two of which were through Manipur hills. L. Boulnois suggests that the route must have been by the Burma road.⁴⁹ The trade between Manipur and Yunan province of China was recorded in the *Chronicles of Manipur*; in 1630, the Chinese merchants visited the kingdom, and from them

was learnt the art of manufacturing gun powder.⁵⁰ The trade continued as late as 1813 A.D.⁵¹ It has been suggested that it was roughly in this part of upper Burma that Periplus of Erythrean Sea placed the terminus of the annual journey made by that "scarcely civilised tribe called the Besatae small bodied men in broad flat faced and peace loving character. Once a year they came to sell their baskets of malbathrum leaves (tezpat) which were prepared on the spot and exported to India in the form of small balls".⁵² Besatae must be one of the tribal groups who sold tezpat leaves to Indian traders as they are doing now. Thus it is apparent that Manipur was in constant contact with Indian, Tai and Chinese traders indirectly with Roman traders in the early centuries of the Christian era. Influence of Chinese trade and technology was felt in Manipur, namely, introduction of silk and silk worm rearing, brick making and making of gun powder.

It is relevant to refer to the Indian trade with and colonisation in South East Asia and China. R.C. Majumdar writes, "The Indians also proceeded to Far East by land routes through Bengal, Manipur and Assam. They reached lower Burma through Arakan, and upper Burma through ravine passes in the Patkai range or Manipur hills. As already noted Chinese wares passed through land routes from Yunan and SzeChuan to northern India in the second century B.C. There are good grounds to hold that this route though difficult was frequently used in olden times."⁵³ G.E. Harvey mentions the trade routes with China; "Two (routes) were along the Irrawaddy and the Salween rivers, the third down the Chindwin river and through Manipur, took the caravan a three months journey to Afghanistan where the silk of China were exchanged for the gold of Europe."⁵⁴ According to a tradition preserved in Burmese chronicle, Maharaja Vamsa, one Dhaja Raja, a Sakiyan prince settled at Manipura about 550 B.C. and later on conquered Tagoung or upper Pagan.⁵⁵ This is one of the many myths recorded in Burmese chronicles which need not be seriously discussed. It has been clearly interpreted by Gerini that the city in question was named Tagoung or Hastinapura. A.R. Phray thinks that "the routes by which the Kshatriya princes was through Manipur which lies within the basin of the Irrawaddy. The northern part of the Kabo valley which is still called Maurera said to be the name of the tribe to which Asoka belonged."⁵⁶ Pemberton gives a description of four routes, two from India to Manipur and two from Manipur to Burma. These must have been the ancient trade routes.⁵⁷

The People: Origin of the Meiteis

Manipur's population has three major ethnic groups: the Meiteis of the valley, the Nagas and Kuki-Chins of the surrounding hills. The people are predominantly Mongoloid with some non-Mongoloid elements, who speak Tibeto-Burman languages. Historical reasons greatly influenced the independent growth of these social groups with varying degrees of cultural development and civilisation, of whom the Meiteis are the most dominant and advanced nationality.

The origin of the Meitei is shrouded in mystery and the study on the subject is greatly influenced by the religious faiths and the political ideologies of the Meiteis themselves, thus making the problem highly speculative and controversial. The ethnic name, Meitei, B.H. Hodgson in the mid nineteenth century thought, was a, "combined appellation of Siamese 'Tai' and Kochin Chinese 'Moy' (Moy Tai = Moytai = Moitai = Meitei) and that the Meiteis belong to the Moi section of the great Tai race."⁵⁸

T.C. Hodson suggested that it was derived from the blending of two words; 'Mei' means man or people and 'Tei' meaning separate: Meitei = separate people.⁵⁹ Another indigenous explanation is that Mitei (not Meitei) is derived from the creation of man by God in His image: Mi = image : Tei = modelled = Modelled after God's image = Mitei.⁶⁰ Chongtham Budhi Singh proposes that this ethnonym is a blending of two tribes of ancient China: Mei and Ti = Mei + ti = Meiti = Meitei.⁶¹ However, it is well known that historically, the word Meitei was used during the period of the establishment of the Ningthouja dynasty by Pakhangba, to mean this clan or dynasty and the ethnic and social groups who were politically and socially integrated within the suzerainty of the Ningthouja.

Aryan Origin ?

Of all the theories of the origin of the Meiteis, the Aryan origin was most enthusiastically propounded and vehemently rejected by the protagonists and their opponents respectively.⁶² This Aryan connection was an outcome of the adoption of Hinduism by the ruling family and the people of valley in the eighteenth century and resultant claim of the descent of the ruling dynasty from Babhruvahana, a scion of the Pandava hero, Arjuna of the Mahabharata. In spite of the best efforts of the great Brahmin scholars backed by the royalty and ruling elite it

cannot be established that the Meiteis as an ethnic group or as a language is Aryan or Indo-Aryan. The fact is that they are neither of Aryan stock nor of the Indo-Aryan speakers. However, there is a historical truth that the Meitei community had absorbed the Aryan elements in its fold as many Aryan colonisers, adventurers and immigrants came to Manipur or passed through this land, as shown in the preceding paragraphs in course of their colonisation of or trade with South West China and South East Asia as Manipur was on the route of trade and migration in the past and it continues to be so even in the present century. The representatives of Aryan elements are Manipuri Brahmins and the Nongchup Haram (those immigrants from the west, *i.e.*, India) section of the Meiteis. The Brahmins and the Hinduised Meiteis including the Meiteised Hindu Aryans helped the propagation of the claim of the Aryan origin. The identification of the followers of Hinduism with the Aryan speakers, a confusion of a religion with a language or a race was the cause of this controversy. The Meiteis as a whole are not Aryan, but there are Aryan elements amongst them.

Mon-Khmer and Tai Connection

Hodgson's suggestion of the Moi-Tai origin of the Meiteis was rejected by T.C. Hodson on the basis of the Meitei being a Tibeto-Burman language and the Tai being of the Siamese-Chinese linguistic family⁶³ though both of them belong to the Sino-Tibetan linguistic family. Hodson writes, "It is difficult specially on linguistic ground to group the Meitheis with the Tai race where the structure and vocabulary of the Meitheis language alike agree with those the Tibeto-Burman."⁶⁴ This ethnic blending of the Moi and Tai tribes has been described by an anthropologist as a puzzling ethnological exercise'.⁶⁵ Though not of the Tai origin, it has been conjectured that there was a relationship between the Meitei, Mon-Khmer and Tai, because of historical connection, both conquest and socio-cultural contacts which produced Tai influence on the language and culture of the Meiteis. Recent archaeological findings of the excavations in Tharon cave, Napachik in Manipur point to the existence of Mon Khmer speaking Austroloid Mongoloid people in Manipur who migrated to this land before the advent of the Tibeto-Burman speakers.⁶⁶ These Mon-Khmer elements were absorbed by later immigrants. "All the archeaological and historical evidences point to the relationship of the ancient Meiteis with the Mon Khmer and Tai people but not of Mon Khmer Tai origin of the

people.”⁶⁷ However the absorption of many Tai immigrants into Meitei society since the eighth century A.D. and more actively since the fifteenth century has been recorded in the chronicles of Manipur. The clan genealogies also indicate the assignment of clan (salai) and lineage or sublineage (sagei), later on Hindu gotras to these eastern (Shan and Burmese) immigrants who are collectively known as the Nongpok Haram (The immigrants from the east)⁶⁸.

Tibeto-Burman Family

G.A.Grierson in his monumental Linguistic Survey of India has grouped the Meitei in the Kuki-Chin sub-family of the Tibeto-Burman languages. A more appropriate name of this sub family, in the opinion of many linguists, would have been the Meitei Kuki-Chin. Based on a historical assumption that the Tibeto-Burman and other Mongoloid groups were habitating the upper courses of the Yangtze and the Hoang-Ho rivers in China in the prehistoric times, Grierson surmises that the ancestors of the Meiteis were among their Kinsmen who migrated from China to upper waters of the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin rivers of upper Burma. They lived in the Hukwang valley, the present land of the Kachins before they moved into the Manipur valley. The Kachin connection has been proved by the linguistic affinity between the Meitei and the Kachin.⁶⁹ Though the time and manner of migration cannot be easily established, Grierson is generally right in presuming that the ancestors of the Meiteis were among the Tibeto-Burman speakers in South west China, eastern Tibet and upper Burma. Hence, their affinity with the Tibeto-Burman tribes like the Nagas and Kukis who are less advanced than them. In this context, it will be relevant to note that S.K. Chatterjee, identifying the Kiratas of the later Vedas with the Tibeto-Burman Mongoloid thinks that they might have established themselves in the southern slopes of the eastern Himalayas in eastern India around the beginning of the first millennium before Christ.⁷⁰ They were the ancestors of the present Bodo-Kachari tribes of Assam, the Nagas, the Kukis and Meiteis of the eastern hills.

The Naga Kuki Connection

Greatly influenced by the linguistic and cultural affinities between the Meitei and the hill tribes of Manipur and their folklore W. McCulloch

advanced a theory that the major tribes and clans of the Meiteis appeared to have been the descendants of the Naga and Kuki tribes.⁷¹ He observes, "From the most credible traditions, the valley appears to have been occupied by some tribes, the principal of which named Koomal (Khuman), Looang (Luwang), Moirang and Meitei (Ningthouja), all of whom came from different directions. For a time, the Koomal appears to have been the most powerful and after its declension the Moirang tribe. But by degrees, the Meithei subdued the whole, and the name Meithei has become applicable to all... I ... think there is ... ground to conclude them to be descendants of the surrounding hill tribes. The language spoken by these tribes are in their pristine state. I conceive then, that in their spoken language, an indication of the descent of the Munniporees (Meitei) might be found. Tradition brings the Moirang tribe from the south, the direction of the Kookies, the Koomal from the east, the direction of the Murrings, and the Meitei and Looang from the north-west, the direction of the Koupoos (Kabui).⁷² R. Brown also endorsed this view of tribal origin of the Meiteis with a speculation, "Should it be a correct view that the valley of Manipur was at no very distant period almost covered entirely by water, the origin of the Munniporees (Meitei) from the surrounding hills is the proper and only conclusion to be arrived".⁷³ T.C. Hodson, writing in the beginning of twentieth century, made a bolder conclusion. "Two hundred years ago, in the internal organisation in village, in habits and manners, the Meiteis were as the hill people now are. The successive courses of foreign invasions, Shan, Burmese, English and Hindu, each left permanent marks on the civilization of the people so that they have passed finally away from the stage of relatively primitive culture with one of comparative civilisation but their ultimate homogeneity with the Nagas and Kukis of the hills is undoubted."⁷⁴

The reasons for a conclusion drawn by the British political officer turned ethnographers appear to be the tradition of common origin prevalent among the hill tribes that the Meiteis were their descendants as found among the Tangkhuls, Kabuis and Maos, the linguistic affinity between the Meitei, Naga and Kuki Chin as established by Grierson, the close connection of some Meitei clans with the hill tribes who were in the vicinity of their habitat and alleged similarity of the coronation costumes of the royal couple with that of some Naga tribes, and architecture of the coronation halls of the Kangle with the ritual houses of the chiefs of the Naga tribes. The tribal origin of the Meitei clans

was refuted by many writers in the 19th and 20th centuries. True, as Ch. Manihar Singh writes, there is no legend or tradition among the Meiteis about their common origin with the tribes. But chronicles refer to the migration of individual Meitei heroes or families to the hills and conversion into the society of the Kabuis, Tangkhul and other unspecified tribes.⁷⁵ There was a process of entry of the hill tribes into Meitei social fold. We are not sure of the immediate descent of the Meiteis or Meitei clans from the hill tribes as propounded by Hodson but one cannot deny the Naga and Kuki Chin elements in the evolution of the Meiteis as an ethnic group.

Ethnic Blending of Mei and Ti Tribes ?

As stated above Ch. Budhi Singh made a bold surmise that the Meitei or Timei, anagramatised form of Meitei, is an outcome of the ethnic blending of people of Mei and Ti tribes of ancient China. As recorded in a Chinese classic, Shu King, "There is a place called Mei in the north of the present district of Khi, department of Wei Hui, Honan, a relic of the ancient name of the whole country. The royal domain of Shang, north of the capital was called Mei."⁷⁶ This classic describes, the people of Mei as indulging in excessive wine drinking which was introduced by a tribe called Ti to the Chinese during the reign of Yu, the founder of Hsia dynasty (2205-1767 B.C.) According to Budhi Singh, the Mei people and Ti tribe were integrated and collectively called Meitei : Meitei ethnic group. He himself has admitted no doubt that, "The place and the time and the process of ethnic formation of the compound people is, nevertheless, yet to be historically ascertained."⁷⁷ One wonders, how, in the absence of historical evidence, or even oral tradition of the blending of the two ethnic groups of ancient China could occur in Manipur valley. Again his attempt to make the oriental dualism of the fire (Mei) and water (Ti) represented by Nungjeng pond and Shuring (cave) of the Kangia, the ancient capital of the Meitei Kings to be the etymological and philosophical basis of the Mei + Ti = Meiti = Meitei is not convincing and contradicts the hypothesis of the ethnic blending of Mei and Ti tribes of ancient China.

The Ethnonym Meitei, whatever the genesis of its derivation, was historically found to have been applied to the Ningthouja clan-dynasty founded by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba and other groups absorbed by this dynasty politically and integrated into the social structure.⁷⁸ These tribes, clans or social groups are Mangangs, Angoms, Luwangs,

Khabas, Naganbas, Khuman, Moirang, Sarang, Leishangthem, Heirem Khunjan. Lera Khongnang, Thanga Kambong, Ulok Ushai, Haokha Lokha, Ningol Laton, Phantek Khuyon, Chakpa, Haorok Konthou etc.⁷⁹ All these tribes and groups were socially organised into seven clans which exist even in the present time. Hodson thinks that there might have been ten or more than seven clans: Ningthouja, Angom, Luwang, Khuman, Moirang, Sarang-Leishangthem (Chenglei) and Kha-Nganba which was a combination of the Khabas and Naganbas. Khabas were once a powerful clan before the advent of the Ningthoujas. Heiren Khunjan, a tribe in south west Manipur, for example, was absorbed into the Ningthouja kingdom and clan and assigned a surname, Heirang Khongjam. For several centuries, the Khumans and Moirang as principal principalities resisted the Meitei hegemony, though social relationship was already established with them. It is to be understood that all the seven clans or other social groups migrated to all parts of the valley and settled in almost clan principalities.

The origin of these pro-Meitei tribes is still obscure and complicated due to the absence of information with regard to their migration before they arrived at Manipur valley. The clan geneologies prepared by the Ningthouja royal court shows common origination from a single divine personality; this may be a later interpolation to create a myth of common origin of the Meiteis which was a necessary ingredient of nation building. The independent clan chronicles and geneologies, like the Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba, Khumanlon, Angomlon, Luwanglon and others shows an independent history of their own, though, social contacts were established and continued with the Meiteis since or little before Pakhangba's time. The Angom chronicle says that they were, at one point of time in their migration, at Khangkhui (Khanghui) cave in Ukhrul hinting at the migration from the north east. There is a tradition of Meitei (Mangang) settlement at Koubru in north west before they moved into the valley. These tribes in their pre-Meitei social formation moved into the valley from different directions and routes. While it is not possible to agree with McCulloch in his assumption of the Meiteis being the descendants of the hill tribes, his conclusion points to a close social and cultural relationship between the particular Meitei clans or tribes with the adjacent tribes, like the Tangkhul relation with the Angoms and Khaba-Naganbas, the Khuman connection with the Marings and the Anals, Luwang connection with the Kabuis (Rongmeis), Moirang connection with the Kabuis and other tribes like Kom, Chiru and Koireng. The adoption or conversion of hill

tribes into Meitei society necessitated the assignment of salai and yumnaks to the converted tribes who had to perform all the rituals prescribed. This practice is still continuing.

On the archaeological findings as noted above, before the coming of the Tibeto-Burman speaking Proto-Meitei tribes, there were Mon-Khmer speaking Austroloid Mongoloid people who were later absorbed by the Tibeto-Burmans. The Indo-Aryans and the Tai (Shans) who came to Manipur in later periods were also absorbed. Thus ethnologically and linguistically, the Meiteis are Tibeto-Burman of the southern Mongoloid with Austroloid, Aryan, and Tai admixtures (including some Negrito and Dravidian elements?) Sociologically, the Meiteis have absorbed these foreign elements and completely integrated them in their social structure. Over and above this strong political and social pressure of absorption, there is the dynamic and all absorbing Meitei language which turned out to be the backbone of the process of the Meiteisation of the various elements in the first millennium of the Christian era. It is most likely that the Meitei as a distinct ethnic, linguistic, cultural and social entity was formed in Manipur valley which was a melting pot of culture. And immediately before they settled down in the valley they must have lived in different places in the surrounding hills and gradually moved down to the foothills and then into the heart of the valley as indicated by the clan chronicles. Therefore, the Manipur valley is the homeland of these Meiteis. This valley with its great fertility and favourable topography had always attracted peoples from different parts of the world; likewise, the ancestors of the different clans of the Meiteis came from different directions and built up a settled civilisation and evolved into remarkable nationality.

Nagas of Manipur

It is not clear how the name 'Naga' was derived from what. There have been several attempts to trace out the etymological origin of this popular ethnonym. Therefore, as Verrier Elwin points out, "the derivation of the word is still obscure"²⁰ If the Kiratas of the later Vedas, Epics and Puranas were the Indo-Mongoloid tribes of eastern India, the Nagas were definitely among them. But the Nagas of the Sanskrit literature, specially of the Puranas are not the present Nagas under discussion. It is hard to accept the theory of 'Naga' originating from the Sanskrit Nag meaning snake or serpent. There is no popular

form of serpent worship among the Nagas though there is fear and dislike for the pythons. Some tried to connect it with Sanskrit Ng meaning mountain as the Nagas live in the highlands. Long ago, in the second century Ptolemy in his Geography refers to a group of people called 'Nangalogae' living in the hills of eastern India. McCrindle, Gerini and others have identified the Nangalogae with the present Nagas (Nangalogae = Nanga log means in Sanskrit naked people (Nanga means naked and logae or log means people). In the middle ages, the chronicles of the Ahoms of Assam refer to the Nagas who fought against them. The first reference to the 'Naga' in Ahom chronicle (Buranji) dates back to the ninth century A.D. When the Ahoms or Shans were living in Upper Burma and had not crossed over to the Brahmaputra valley. The Muslim writer Shihabuddin Talish who accompanied Mirjumla, the general of Emperor Aurangzeb who invaded Assam in the mid seventeenth century refers to the Nagas. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Naga had become quite a popular name. Many European writers accepted that the word was derived from Assamese or Sanskrit Nanga. W. Robinson wrote in 1841, "The origin of the word Naga is unknown; but it has been supposed to have been derived from the Sanskrit word 'Nanga' and applied in derision to the people, from the paucity of their clothings; but there seems to be little foundation for the etymological derivation, as the form has never been known whether applied by the Bengalees to either the Khassia or the Garos with whom they were far better acquainted than that with the Nagas and besides, the Garos especially are habitually accustomed to a greater degree of nudity than of the Naga tribes with whom we are acquainted".⁸¹ But in the end of the nineteenth century, a new theory was propounded by Peal and Holecombe that it came from the word, 'Nok' meaning man in some of the Tibeto Burman languages like that of the Aos, Noctes, Garos etc.⁸² as the tribes call themselves mostly man or people indicative of the absence of any class or distinction in the social order. Let us quote Elwin again, "The meaning and derivation of the word Naga has long been disputed. Our chief authority on the Naga tribes, J.H. Hutton originally thought that it was a compilation of the Assamese Naga (pronounced Noga) probably meaning 'mountain' from Sanskrit Ng a mountain or the inaccessible place. Later, he reluctantly recanted this opinion in view of the fact that Ptolemy speak of the Nagas as Nanga or naked. This does not seem a very strong argument. Waddel on the other hand explains Nagas meaning hillmen and Peal derives it from

‘Nok’, a word used by the eastern Nagas.”⁸³ Though no final word has been said on this derivation, it is certain that this name was given by the outsiders to mean this group of people who are divided into more than two dozen tribes. Whatever the origin, this is an old name popularised by the Ahoms and the British. The theory of Naga coming from the Sanskrit or Hindustani Nanga cannot be easily discarded.

The British military and political officers gave the generic name to the present Nagas of Nagaland, Assam, and Manipur. In Manipur, the people were known by their tribe’s names throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the British for administrative convenience applied it to mean a group of tribes who according to their anthropological classification were Nagas. The Naga tribes of Manipur are the Tangkhul, Zemi, Liangmei and Rongmei (Zeliangrong), including Puimei Mao, Maram, Maring, Anal, Moyon, Monsang, Lamgang, Chothe, Thangal Koirang, Chiru who are all Tibeto Burman speakers. Their migration into Manipur has been told and retold in their traditions preserved in their folk lore, hymns and songs. There are legends current among the Nagas about their origin and migration — these traditions tell more about their migration and settlement in Manipur and trans—Chindwin region. It is reliably believed that these tribes were in occupation of the present habitat in the early centuries of the Christian era or even in the centuries before Christ. The Meitei historical and literary works refer to the Naga tribes as having been in occupation of the hills of Manipur.

The Kukis

The Kuki tribes of Manipur are a branch of the great Kuki Chin family of people. They are linguistically related to Meiteis. Ptolemy’s Tiladae is identified with the Kukis by Gerini; and Kukis were of course included among the Kiratas. Kuki is a generic term covering a large number of tribes in the whole of north east India and some parts of Burma. Kuki is probably a Bengali word meaning hillmen. Some Kuki tribes migrated to Manipur hills in the pre-historic times along with or after the Meitei advent in Manipur valley. Greater migration occurred in the 18th century onwards due to the great Kuki exodus which affected the demographic landscape of the hills of Manipur and adjoining areas. The Kuki-Chin tribes are the Thadou, Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Gangte, Simte, Zou, Biete, Mizos. There are attempts made to cover these tribes under a new name Zomi.

The Manipuri Muslims or Meitei Pangan settled in Manipur since the seventeenth century. They adopted Meitei language as their mother tongue and now form an integral part of society of Manipur. Many Indian communities who migrated to Manipur at the end of the nineteenth century were the Bihari oil crushers, the Bengalis and during the colonial period, came the Marwaris, Nepalis, and after India's independence, the Punjabis both Hindus and Sikhs, Tamils and others. Thus, Manipur with her pluralistic social fabric presents a picture of homogeneity and heterogeneity with the multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual base of culture and civilisation. The history of Manipur is the unending process of evolution of such a culture and society.

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2. O. Ibochouba Singh (Ed.), *Bulletin of Mutua Museum*, 1982. P. Gunindro Singh, *Coins of Manipur*, 1983, p. 36. A coin with the legend, "Garibaniwaza Mekhleswar" was discovered by Mutua Bahadur of Mutua Museum, Imphal.
3. W. Yumjao Singh, *Report on Archaeological Studies in Manipur*, Imphal 1935, p. 75, refers to a manuscript of the 17th century entitled "Sakok Sading which mentions that there was gemstone (mani) near Nungoibi and Taipongthok from which "Manipur" is derived.
4. Kangleipak, land of the Kanglei, Poireipak, land of the Poireis, and Meitrabak, the land of the Meiteis, Kanglei, Poirei and Meitei are loosely used to mean the Meiteis of the Kingdom.
5. N. Khelchandra Singh, *Ariba Manipurgi Sahitya Itihas* (A history of ancient Manipuri literature), 1969, Imphal, p. 2 and Chandrasekhar (ed.) *Shakok Lamlen*, 1972, p. 4 refer to the other names of the country such as 'Tillikoktom, Namthak Sharonpung, Mayai Koyren, Meera Pongthoklam, Haana Houba Konna Loiba, Muwapalli, Poirei Pungmayon.
6. R.B. Pemberton, *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India* 1835, Calcutta, 2nd Edn. Gauhati, 1966 pp. 11-20. Michael Symes, *An Embassy to the court Ava*, London, 1801. Henry Yule, *A Narrative of an Embassy to Ava*, 1855, Rept. with an introduction by Hugh Tinker, 1968, London.
7. Abdul Ali, *Notes on Early History of Manipur*, 1923, Calcutta. The text of the treaty is reproduced in this work.
8. P. Gunindro *op. cit.*, p. 62
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Dharma Samhita*, a Sanskrit work written during the reign of Ghambir Singh, records the popular legend, quoted by J. Roy *A History of Manipur*, 1958, p. 4
11. Mani Singh and Mangi Singh, (translated), Vijoy Panchalli, Vol. 4, Imphal, p. 4
12. S.K. Chatterjee, *Kirata Jana Kriti, Contribution of the Indo Mongoloid People to Indian Culture*, Calcutta, 1950, 2nd Edition, 1974, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, p. 124.
13. N. Khelchandra, *Ariba Manipuri Sahityagi Itihas*, p.115

14. Panditraj Atom Bapu Sharma was the greatest Sanskrit scholar of Manipur during the colonial period.
15. R.C. Majumdar, *Expansion of Aryan culture in East India*, Atombapu Memorial Lecture, Imphal, 1966, p. 16.
16. Sanamahi Scholars of the revivalist, through the different marups and publications propound this view. The most consistent exponent is Kangjia Gopal, Mahabharat Ki Manipur Adungei Kangleipal Nattee (Manipur of Mahabharata is not ancient Kangleipak) Imphal, 1968.
17. *Critical Edition of Mahabharata*, D.R. Bhandarkar Institute of Oriental Studies, Poona.
18. Reproduced in the above edition of the Mahabharata.
19. R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
20. S.K. Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
21. *Ibid.*
22. R.C. Majumdar, (Ed.). *Ancient India as described by classical writers*, Calcutta; G.E.R Gerini, *Researches into Ptolemy's Geography*, Second Reprint, 1968.
23. K.L. Barua *Early History of Kamarupa*, 1933, p. 8; P.C. Choudhury *A History of the civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D.* 1960. p. 16
24. K.L. Barua, *op. cit.*, p. 8
25. G.E.R. Gerini, *op. cit.*, p. 30-33
26. *Ibid.*
27. A.R. Phayre, *A History of Burma*, 1884, p. 3.
28. P.C. Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
29. Gerini, *op. cit.*, p. 20, 25, 49, 77.
30. C. Budhi Singh, *Meitei Ethnonym*, Journal of Manipur University, 1984, p. 25.
31. Manipur is described by her folk poets as Sana Leibak the golden land. The Japanese described her a flower on the lofty heights.
32. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
33. The present boundary remains in tact since 1834 after the transfer of Kabaw valley.
34. A. Lyall in his introduction to T.C. Hodson, *The Meitheis*, London, 1908, p. 8.
35. L. Jugeswar Singh, *Bhugol Ahanba*, Imphal, 1938. R.P. Singh, *Geography of Manipur*. NBT, New Delhi, S.A. Ansari, *Some Aspects of Geography of Manipur*, 1985.
36. S.A. Ansari, *Some Aspects of Geography of Manipur*, 1985.
37. *Ibid.*
38. E.W. Dun, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
39. Ansari, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-66.
40. S.C. Sinha, *Ethnobotanical Study of Manipur*, Ph.D. Thesis of Manipur University.
41. R.B. Pemberton *op. cit.*, p. 27.
42. E.W. Dun, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
43. F. Kingdon Ward, *Plant Hunter in Manipur*, London, 1952, p. 232.
44. Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 247.
45. Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 247.
46. *Ibid.*
47. L. Boulnois, *The Silken Road*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1966 (translated from French), p. 31.
48. Quoted in L. Boulnois, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
49. *Ibid.*

50. T.C. Hodson, *The Meitheis*, 1908, p.10.
51. R.B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
52. P.C. Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.14.
53. R.C. Majumdar, *Age of Imperial Unity*, vol. II. p. 652; R.C. Majumdar, *Hindu Colonies in Far East*, p.14.
54. G.E. Harvey, *A History of Burma*, 1926, p. 9.
55. Gerini, *op. cit.*, p. 745.
56. A.R. Pharay, *History of Burma*, 1884, pp 5-6.
57. Pemberton, *op.cit.*, p. 51 and pp. 55-56.
58. Quoted in T.C. Hodson, p.10.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Chongtham Budhi Singh, Meitei Ethnonym, Journal of Manipur University Imphal, 1984, pp. 26-35
61. *Ibid.*
62. Ch. Manihar Singh, *The Meitei : Origin and Affinity*, JMU, 1984 pp. 9-25 gives the different theories of the origin of the Meiteis.
63. Hodson, *op. cit.*, p. 10. G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III, part III, p. 6
64. Hodson, *Ibid.*
65. Ch. Budhi Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 26. "For the Moi have no ethnic linguistic uniformity among themselves: their representatives in Vietnam are Mon Khmer speakers while some of their compatriots are identified as Tai people. "See also Frank Leban (Ed.) *Ethnic groups of Mainland South East Asia*, 1964 and P. Gogoi, *Tai and Tai Kingdoms*, 1968.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.* see also O.K. Singh
68. A.B. Sharma, *Pakhangba*, 1952 and L. Ibungohal Singh, *An Introduction to Manipur*, Second Edn. 1963.
69. Hodson, p.10, Grierson p. 6.
70. S.K. Chatterjee, *op.cit.*, p. 36.
71. W. McCulloch, *An Account of the valley of Munnipore*, Calcutta, 1859, p. 4.
72. *Ibid.*
73. R. Brown, *A Statistical Account of Manipur*, 1874, p. 28.
74. Hodson, *op. cit.*, p.11.
75. Ch. Manihar Singh, *op.cit.*, p.12
76. Max Muller (Ed.) *Sacred Books of the East* (Sacred Books of China) translated James Legge. Vol.II Part I quoted C.B. Singh.
77. C.B. Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 31.
78. RK. Jhalajit Singh, p.14.
79. C.B. Singh, p. 32.
80. Verrier Elwin, *Nagaland*, 1960, Shillong, p. 4.
81. William Robinson, *A descriptive Account of Assam*, Gauhati, 1841, p. 380.
82. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Revd. Edn. 1963, p. 366.
83. Elwin, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

2

Sources of History

Historical Studies in Manipur

The people of Manipur have a strong sense of history. The Meiteis who mastered the art of writing from very early times kept records of the past in forms of royal chronicles, clan geneologies and other literary works covering almost all branches of knowledge. But their concept of history (Pu-wari : story of forefathers) was somewhat vague as myths were given too much prominence in these historical literatures. The 'consciousness' of the history of Manipur became significant in Meitei society since Hinduisation in early eighteenth century. The writing of history, keeping of chronicles, use of eras and calendars, racial origin of the rulers, people and the country were greatly influenced by the process of Sanskritisation. Garibaniwaz, the Hinduised ruler caused a history of Manipur called Vijay Panchali to be written.¹ J.P. Wade, an English surgeon who accompanied Captain Welsh in his expedition to Assam in 1792-94 mentions Mughal or Mussalman connection with Manipur in his *Account of Assam*.² Francis Hamilton in his *Account of Assam* (1807) devotes a section on Manipur. With the Burmese conquest of Manipur known as the seven year devastation (1819-26) and consequent involvement of Manipur in the first Anglo-Burmese War and posting of British military officers of the East India Company, there grew up an active interest among the officers in the history, ethnography and topography of Manipur and her inhabitants both the Meiteis and the hill tribes. Mention may be made of Francis Jenkins who became a Commissioner of Assam, George Gordon the first political agent in Manipur and R.B. Pemberton, who as a young

subaltern volunteered to join the small guerilla force of Gambhir Singh, the exiled prince of Manipur in his historic liberation movement to drive away the Burmese from his kingdom and who later on represented Manipur as a commissioner in the great Kabaw Valley dispute with Burma may be regarded as the pioneer of modern historical researches in Manipur.³ His *Report on the North eastern Frontier of British India* was published in 1835 with a major portion devoted to Manipur. Pemberton Report, as it came to be popularly known, has been a reference work not only on Manipur but on all adjoining areas of India and Burma including the kingdom of Pong. He studied the extant chronicles and available historical literatures and in course of his research, he discussed a Pong Chronicle (a chronicle of Shan Kingdom of Mogaung) which refers to the invasion of Manipur by Shans in the eighth century and conquest of Kabaw valley by Manipur. He rejected the Hindu origin of the Meiteis and propounded an untenable theory of Tartar origin of the same people. His knowledge of the history of Manipur covers the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Two years later, George Gordon published a dictionary of English and Manipuri in 1837.⁴ A *note on Thadou Grammar* by Sopitt was published in 1857. W. McCulloch who served twenty seven years in Manipur, a man of culture and literary ability published his *Account of the Valley of Munnipore and surrounding hill tribes* in 1859.⁵ His knowledge of history as found in the Account has not increased much since Pemberton; but his observations on ethnography, economy and culture of Manipur, are highly accurate and the work remains for many decades, a chief authority on the subject. This reference to early history before the 18th century contains Manipur-Pong connection since the 8th century. He perhaps studied the old chronicles of the kingdom. E.T. Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (1872) contains some accounts of Manipur tribes. McCulloch was succeeded by R. Brown, a surgeon as political agent who published his *Statistical Account of Manipur* in 1874 which is an important study on history and culture of the people of the state. One philologist who would have contributed a lot to the knowledge of Manipur and north east India was G.H. Damant of the Indian Civil Service but for his untimely death in 1879 at Khonoma in Nagaland. He was for some time officiating Political Agent in Manipur and published research papers on Manipur in the journals of Asiatic Society of Bengal and Royal Asiatic Society.⁶

But the history of Manipur in the proper sense was not attempted till Alexander Mackenzie's celebrated *History of the Relation of the*

Government with hill tribes of North Eastern Frontier of British Bengal which was published in 1884. Manipur being outside the British India empire, occupies a place of pride in this work. This book represents the official views of historical events and is regarded as "authentic" history based on official records of the Government of India. What V.A. Smith's *Early History of India* is to Indian historical studies, Mackenzie's History is to the growth of historical studies in eastern India, E.W. Dun's *Gazetteer of Manipur*, 1886 and its abridged edition, 1891 are repetition as far as the history of Manipur was concerned. In 1890, perhaps against the writings of the British writers, repeating Manipur's Aryan origin, the first history of Manipur in Manipuri was published by Haodijam Chaitanya. His *Manipur Itihas* gives the dynastic history of Manipur based on the chronicles written after Hinduisation.⁷ The British conquest of Manipur in 1891 and the controversial action of the British officers including chief commissioner F.J. Quinton and political agent Grimwood and the behaviour of the king and princes of Manipur created fresh interest on Manipur. *My Three years in Manipur* by Mrs. Ethel Grimwood, 1891 gave a personal account of the events. The Indian view was presented in R.G. Basak's *Manipur Prahalika*, 1891 in Bengali⁸ and Manmohan Ghosh's *Did the Manipuri Princes get a fair Trial?*, 1891 containing the legal documents. These works are not history but eyewitness accounts and documents of the last days of Manipur's independent existence. There was a lot of criticism over Manipur affairs after the War and James Johnstone, a former political agent who had a distinguished career as a frontier officer in India published his *My Experience in Manipur and Naga Hills* in 1896. These works are not an important contribution to scientific ethnography but Johnstone's work gives interesting information on the character of the people and some historical accounts. Ghosh's and Basak's works are important sources of history of the events. After the conquest, encouragement was given for the translation of the chronicles which was well utilised by ethnographers like T.C. Hodson and John Shakespeare in early twentieth century, the interest on Manipur was encouraged, B.C. Allen's *Gazetteer of Naga Hills and Manipur* 1904 was the first of the several remarkable works. Then came T.C. Hodson's *Magnum Opus*, the *Meitheis* in 1908. Hodson was an assistant political agent in Manipur whose services was terminated for having shot dead a tribal porter, later joined the University of London. He was the first scholar with anthropological knowledge to have studied the Meiteis and the

Naga and Kuki tribes. Hodson's *Meiteis* is still the best full scale study of the Meiteis, their society, polity, religion, and culture based on the ethnological and historical evidences. His *Naga Tribes of Manipur*, 1911 is the first comprehensive work on the Nagas of Manipur but it is not as remarkable as the first work. Another frontier officer who did a lot for the ethnography, and folklore of Manipur and Mizoram was John Shakespeare. His *Lushai-Kuki Clans*, 1913 is still a very authentic work on the subject. Shakespeare contributed well written papers on religious beliefs of the Meiteis in learned journals.⁹ On the language front G.A. Grierson's monumental work, *Linguistic Survey of India* Vol. III part II and III deal with the languages and dialects of different tribes and communities of Manipur, Meitei, Naga and Kuki. Mention may be made of William Pettigrew's *Tangkhul Grammar*, 1919 which is a first authentic study on the Tangkhuls. Another exciting discovery during the period was G.R. Gerini's *Research on Ptolemy's Geography*, 1909 which refers to the existence of a Hindu Kingdom in Manipur in the 6th century B.C. based on a Burmese Chronicle. *Manipur Purabritta* the second work on history of Manipur by a local writer, written by P. Parijat was published in 1917. He gave the geneology of the rulers with their chronology. He proposed that Nongda Lairen Pakhangba might have ruled in the fourth century A.D. and not from 33 A.D.¹⁰

Shakespeare's interest also influenced other capable officers to write on the tribes of Manipur like, Christopher Gimson's *Notes on Maring Nagas*,¹¹ William Shaws's *Notes on Thadou Kukis* (1933). Abdul Ali, the Indian archivist published his *Note on Early History of Manipur* in 1923 which deals with early Manipur's contact with the East India Company. In spite of some deficiencies, this small work was important and significant information about 18th century Manipur which has been well used by later historians. L.W. Shakespeare's *History of Assam Rifles*, 1929 deals with the exploits of the Assam Rifles, a para-military forces who acted as the sentinel of the eastern frontier, in Manipur in the War of 1891 and Kuki Rebellion of 1917-19.

Sanskrit and English educated scholars of Manipur had started writing on history of Manipur. Among them Panditraj Atombapu Sharma and W. Yumjao Singh were the foremost; the former represented the literary school and the latter represented the historical school. Panditraj Atombapu (1889-1963) wrote more than one hundred papers and books. His first well-known book was *Haree Mayee* (translated into English by Arambam Dorendro Singh) which was

reviewed by J.C. Higgins of Indian Civil Service. It deals with the Vedic interpretation of the origin and history of Manipur.¹² His *Manipur Itihas* was published in 1940. Pakhangba came out in 1953. W. Yumjao Singh was an amateur archaeologist, his *Report on the Archaeological Studies* in Bulletin No. 1. 1935 is a landmark in the historical studies in the state. His discovery of coins of the second century A.D. and the controversial Phayeng Plates added a new dimension to the history of Manipur. His later works, *Manipur Itihas*, 1946, and *Early History of Manipur* (1966), published posthumously do not have the earlier historical touch. Khumanthem Kaomacha's *Manipur Ittibritti*, 1938 is an improved account of history of Manipur so far attempted. He listed the names of books alleged to have been burnt during the reign of Garibaniwaz under the instruction of a fanatic Hindu missionary. The fact that these books were well remembered at a period of conservative Hindu heydays in Manipur shows that the copies of these books were available. Mutum Jhulon's *Vijoy Panchali* in English is a commendable work, though it was not highly scientific work.

Robert Reid, a Governor of Assam in continuation of the tradition of Mackenzie, published his *History of Areas Bordering Assam* in 1942 devoting a chapter on Manipur, coming of the Anglo-Manipur War and colonial rule in Manipur.¹³ One should remember the pioneering work of R.K. Sanahal Singh, *Manipur Itihas*, 1947. This is a short but well documented work.

Since Abdul Ali, Manipur did not receive much attention of Indian scholars, though some references to her were made in the works dealing with the British Burma War. A.C. Bannerjee's *British Annexation of Burma*, R.M. Lahiri, *Annexation of Assam*, S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relation* give some references to Manipur. However, S.K. Chatterjee, a friend of Manipur and Manipuri literature devotes a sizable section on early history, language and culture of Manipur in his *Kirata Jana Kriti* published in 1950.¹⁴ J. Roy's *A History of Manipur* 1958 was first of its kind in English. This work is factual and refreshing, in comparison with the monotony of the earlier works. Interest in Manipur's history was always aroused in the British conquest of Manipur, R.C. Majumdar's *War against Manipur*, 1955.¹⁵ Small works but handy like, H. Bijoy Singh, *Meitrabakki Wari*, Nandalal Sharma's *Meitrabak* (1960), L.M.I. Singh's *An Introduction to Manipur* (1960 and 1963) came out. Nandalal Sharma's *Meitrabak* is still an important work of reference next to Hodson's *The Meithei*,

R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *A Short History of Manipur* (1965) is history of the Ningthouja dynasty of Manipur based on indigenous sources which had not been utilised so far. This is an improvement on J. Roy's history. This book was built up around the royal chronicle *Cheitharol Kumbaba* in early period and from other sources in the later periods. In the 1960's there was strong awareness of need for historical writings. The publication of old chronicles and historical literatures was taken up by research organisations and individual scholars who were given financial assistance by the state. The *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, the royal chronicle of Manipur was edited by L.M. Iboongohal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh and published by the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in 1967. O. Bhogeswar Singh published *Ningthourol Lambuba*, another chronicle without chronology in 1968. Many old historical works in Manipur were published. Y. Bhagya's is *Leithak Leikharon*, N. Khelchandra's, *Chada Laihui*, *Naothingkhong Phambal Kaba*,¹⁶ *Khumanlol*, geneology of the Khuman, O. Bhogeswar's, *Ningthourol Sheireng*, 1967 *Khumanlamba Yaima's Pakhangba Phambal* (coronation of Pakhangba) 1967, *Poireiton Khunthokpa* (colonization of Poireiton, 1969). Works in Manipuri like L. Chandramani Singh's *Manipur Itihas* which deals with Anglo-Manipuri relation upto 1891 came out in 1970. W. Gourchandra's *Manipurigi Aroiba Lal* (War of 1891), R.K. Sanahal's *Chingthangkhomba*, *Ganga Chatpa* (Bhagyachandra's pilgrimage to Bengal) Bir Tikendrajit Singh, Thangal General, N. Khelchandra's *Ariba Manipuri Sahityagi Itihas* (1969) were published. Other works are O. Bhogeswar's *Sanamahi Laikan* (1973), Chandrasekhar's *Loiyamba Shilyen* (Royal Decree of Loiyumba) N. Ibochouba's *Thiren Laiyat* (a text on Meitei philosophy), C. Bhogeswor's *Kangbalon* (Chronicle of Kangba), *Shakok Lamlen* (a work on Meitei's religious belief). The *Vijoy Panchali*, in four volumes written originally by Kritichandra in Bengali was translated into Manipuri by Mani Singh and Mangi Singh in 1966. S.N. Parratt, *Religion of Manipur*, Lal Dena's *British Policy towards Manipur* are good research works. Several research journals, both in English and Manipuri deal with different aspects of the history and culture of Manipur. Both institutional and individual researches are still continuing. Institutions like, the Manipur Sahitya Parishad, Manipur University (erstwhile Jawaharlal Nehru University Post-Graduate Centre), Manipur State Kala Akademi, Manipur State Museum, State Archaeology Dept., and Mutua Museum have contributed greatly to the growth of historical studies.

For pre-history and proto-history, the archaeological excavations carried out by O.K. Singh of Archaeology Dept., in Khangkhui Cave (Ukhrul), Tharon Cave (Tamenglong) and Napachink (Wangoo) are revealing many new datas and collection of inscription, sculptures, coins, other evidences are going on.¹⁷ Mutua Museum's collection of coins is breaking new grounds in numismatic studies. The bulletins of the Museum and P. Gunindro's *Manipuri Numismatics* (1983) are commendable works. On the cultural and ethnographic studies, we may mention, the *Ritual Dances of Manipur* by Lightfoot, *Aspects of Indian Culture* by E. Nilakanta, K.B. Singh (Ed.) *An Introduction to Tribal Language and Culture*, M. Horam's *Naga Polity and Socio-cultural life of the Nagas* (Tangkhal). Asuso Yuno's *Naga Struggle against the British* under Jadonang and Gaidinliu, Gangmumei Kabui's *Anal — Transborder Tribe of Manipur*, Chaki-Sarkar's *Feminism in Traditional Society: Women of Manipur Valley*. W. Ibohal Singh's *A History of Manipur* (1986).

This is a brief story of history writing in Manipur during the past one and a half centuries. The scholars who worked either with pen or spade have contributed to the present knowledge of history and culture of the land which was reconstructed from the various sources of information which are deciphered and analysed in the following paragraphs.

Sources of History

A history is, in a way, a creation of the historian based on his perception, reconstruction and interpretation of the past. Reconstruction of the past which is his main job is dependent on the availability of sources of information at his disposal and his method of selection of the sources. The historian and his data are inextricably inter-woven and he will be just an important layman without his fact. Thus history of Manipur is also an outcome of the task of reconstruction of the past based on the sources of information categorised in the three heads, indigenous literary sources, the archaeological evidences and foreigners accounts including the archival materials.

Literary Sources

The indigenous literary sources are the most important of all the sources of history of Manipur. They may be further classified as

chronicles and clan geneologies, historical works of particular ruler or events, royal decrees and treatises, religious and secular literatures, of these chronicles, the *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, the royal diary which claims to have the record of happenings from the reign of Pakhangba (33-154 A.D.) to the present is most remarkable. This is the backbone of history of Manipur under the Ningthouja dynasty. This is an unique document which can be utilised for reconstructing the history of Manipur — all aspects, political, social, economic and cultural. Any nation will be proud of such a historical chronicle.

The Cheitharol Kumbaba

The celebrated *Cheitharol Kumbaba* is the most important royal chronicle of Manipur which records the historical events of nearly two thousand years covering the reign of 78 Kings from Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (33-154 A.D.) to Bodha Chandra Singh (1941-55). The unique chronicle written in Meitei script is kept in the royal palace and entry to this State diary is made by the learned royal scribes. Even now, this tradition of history keeping is still continued by the Pandit Loisang, the college of priests in the royal palace of Manipur. This chronicle was written out in Bengali script and edited by Pandit Thongam Madhob Singh and published by Visvabharati Mandir. Then with the permission granted by Maharaja Churachand Singh, the chronicle was edited by L.M. Iboongohal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh and published by the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in 1967.

The *Cheitharol Kumbaba* has three phases: the early phase from Nongda Lairen Pakhangba to 1484 A.D. during the reign of Kyamba, the middle phase from 1484 A.D. to 1780 A.D. during the reign of Bhagyachandra and the later phase from 1780 A.D. to the middle of twentieth century. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* is a combination of two practices: *Cheitharol* comes from the word *Cheithaba* which was established in 1484 A.D. by King Kyamba, to substitute the announcement of the end of the year by a stick holding person known as *Cheithaba*. *Cheithaba* means giving up of the stick expressing the announcement of the end of the year. *Cheithaba* is also a state ceremony of making a person a scapegoat for the evil burdens of the king and the country for the coming year. The person is called *Cheithaba* of the year and the year is named after him. He is given tax free land and other privileges like exemption from feudal dues. The

first Cheithaba in 1484 A.D. was Hiyangloi. Kumbaba or Kumpaba means counting of years, (Kum = year : Paba = counting). Thus Cheitharol Kumbaba means counting of years according to Cheithaba.

The chronicle keeping was started from this year 1484 A.D. the year of Hiyangloi, the Cheithaba. Therefore, the early phase of this Chronicle which deals with the pre-Kyamba rulers is extremely sketchy. It was definitely a later interpolation, reconstructed out of the available sources of informations. From Nongda Lairen Pakhangba to Kiyamba, there are 38 kings and they are historical personalities. The Hindu mythical rulers given in the chronicles above Pakhangba were later interpolations. Though sketchy, these events are quite historical and corroborated by other chronicles. So it would be clear that this was reconstructed by the writers of the Chronicle. The year of the accession and end of the rule of a particular king was mentioned.

The middle phase from 1484 to 1780 A.D. from Kyamba to Bhagyachandra, it has become quite reliable. The year and month of the events are mentioned. Later on, even the dates and days are also mentioned. But due to the repeated Burmese invasions of Manipur in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Chronicle was lost. And it was rewritten in 1780 A.D. at the palace of Kanchipur at the order of King Bhagyachandra, by Chirom Shyamram and Oinam Anandaram under the supervision of the uncle of the King, Ananta Shai Khwairakpa. This is recorded in the chronicle itself. The impact of the rewriting is reflected in the entries of the events before this date with regard to the record of birth of princes, accession to the throne and death of Kings. For instance, the Chronicle records that king Khagemba was born in 1576 A.D. and king Charairongba was born in 1637 A.D. At the time of their birth they were princes, sons of their parents, the reigning kings. A son of a king is born as a prince but not born as a king. Therefore, one notices that the contemporaneous recording is not reflected. In the later phase in the post-1780 A.D. period, the entries are properly recorded. But again the Burmese occupation of Manipur (1819-26) disrupted the regular keeping of the royal diary. So in 1844, when Nara Singh became the ruler, he ordered the royal astrologer to prepare the Chronicle for the period concerned with the help of six other scholars. Thangchamcha Shyampurna made the actual entries. During the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891 the Chronicle was not entered; so Major Maxwell, the political officer of the British occupation force ordered the entry in the Chronicle. The major portion of the Chronicles is devoted to eighteenth, nineteenth and

twentieth centuries. The contents of the Chronicle are varied and almost all embracing. Taking at random, the chronicle records the accession of the ruler on the throne, and death of kings. The year, month, date and day are also mentioned. The military conquest and the military expedition, names of heroes and prisoners of war, description of the actual fighting, weapons used, animals and weapon captured, tribute realised are all recorded. The royal decrees for administrative changes, creation of departments, appointment of nobles to different posts, exemption from royal or state service, the rates of taxes in the form of service and kind are not left out. The royal excursions or pleasure trips to lakes and pilgrimage to abode of deities, tragedies in boat drowning of nobles are not forgotten. The record includes major cultural and social events: The tribal festival in October at the royal palace, invention of drum during the reign of Khuyoi Tampok, introduction of particular games, like Kaang, horse hockey, beginning of a Ratha Jatra, car festival of the Hindu, visits of holy men from India, migration of Brahmin and Muslim to Manipur, writing of books, performance of religious sacrifices and festivals. There are occasions of birth of royal children, death of important personalities, performance of Sati by widows of royalty in early eighteenth century. The punishment of criminals, exile to penal settlements, religious conversion are also recorded. The fixation of boundaries between Manipur and the Shan kingdom of Pong in 15th century, between Manipur and Burma, and Naga Hills, disputes between Manipur and foreign power are well described. Even capture of leopard and tigers, in the vicinity of the capital, gladiatorial fight between animals and men in the market places, dredging of the river and drainage of swamps, introduction of new varieties of paddy seeds are mentioned. The visits of Lord Curzon and Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India to Manipur are also recorded. Even the royal suspicion of a queen for alleged infidelity of the king is found. This chronicle is extremely useful document for the reconstruction of all aspects of the history of Manipur.

The Cheitharol Kumbaba adopted three chronological systems or eras: Kalyabda, Saka era, Chandrabda or Manipur (Kangleipak) era. The chronicle opens with accession of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba on the throne in Kalyabda 3135 and it records that fortyfive years after the accession of Pakhangba Sakabda was started. Since Saka era was started in 78 A.D. Pakhangba's accession was dated 78 A.D. - 45 - 33 A.D. It was due to later interpolation of the entry. The regnal years of

the seventy eight rulers from Pakhangba to Bodha Chandra Singh were recorded in the Saka era. The adoption of the Sakabda must have been effected after Manipur's conversion to Hinduism. Manipur is well known for her astrologers and astronomers. However during the reign of Bhagyachandra, the Cheitharol kumbaba adopted two eras: Saka era and Chandrabda. Gambhir Singh, a future king was recorded to have been born on Wednesday, 28, Phairen, 1709, Sakabda, and 999, Chandrabda. The chronicle itself records the preparation of a calendar and establishment of an era called Kangleipak Era which was equated with Chandrabda. By backdating, the Kangleipak or Manipur era or Chandrabda was fixed in 788 A.D.

With regard to its authenticity, the introductory preface giving the mythical rulers as the ancestors of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba are later inventions and are just ignored. Though the contents of the Chronicle make the rulers from Pakhangba onward historical, the Chronicle says that the first seven kings are divine beings which is not correct as there are various historical evidences to establish their historicity. Those events which are corroborated by other chronicles and independent sources may be accepted as authentic. However, from 13th century onward, the Chronicle is highly reliable. Pre-fifteenth century informations as noted already are very brief: but a visit of a Shan prince Shamlongpha is correctly noted by a shan chronicle. The chronology before Kyamba was highly doubtful and it is rightly suspected that it is a later interpolation. So the events described in the chronicle are all antedated.

It will be worthwhile to recall what the pioneer historians said about the Cheitharol Kumbaba. L.M. Iboongohal describes it as the most authoritative diary and history of Manipur and most authentic manuscript. But W. Yumjao Singh expressed doubt about the authenticity of the work. He writes, Cheitharol kumbaba or Royal chronicle would have been the most valuable work for historical investigation, as it professes to record all the important daily happenings and occurrences of the state, but here also we are deceived, as there is a passage which clearly says that in the year 1780 A.D. by orders of Jai Singh this book was rewritten as the former copy was not available. It is not a matter of joke to recollect things of daily occurrences with their dates. Many of these I think had to be based on hearsay and thus we have to think seriously before we take everything with in the book for granted. Another defect of this book is its having been under the strict supervision of the authorities, it does not record

any of the patricidal and fratricidal incident of the 18th and 19th centuries. But it simply records the changes of rulers suppressing the historically important movements and information."

We may not agree with Yumjao Singh's charge of deception against the writers of the chronicle. The important nobles and scholars used to keep private copies of the diary in their private collection and king Jai Singh's scribes might have copied from them. Many modifications and alterations must have been made during the rewriting of the Chronicle. So it may not be the most authentic document but is very useful and important document.

The Chronicle deals with the exploits of the Meitei Kings and gives a biased view. It also reflects the royalty's view of people and events. The religious conflicts of 18th century are not reflected in the Royal Chronicle. Naturally a historian will accept a source only after a great scrutiny of the material. Despite these deficiencies, the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* provides information for the reconstruction of the history of Manipur.

The other chronicle which should be read together with *Cheitharol Kumbaba* is *Ningthourol Lambuba*, the first part of which from Pakhangba to Garibaniwaz was published by O. Bhogeswar Singh. *Ningthourol Lambuba* is more detailed than *Cheitharol Kumbaba* but this does not have any chronology. Perhaps this is a more traditional chronology of Manipur. *Ningthourol Kumbaba* is also another royal chronicle of Ningthouja dynasty. Of the chronicles of the clan and clan principalities, we have to mention, *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba*, the chronicle of Moirang principality which was published in 1983 by O. Bhogeswar Singh. The clan geneologies and chronicles, like *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba*, chronicle of Moirang principality by O. Bhogeswar, *Khumanlol*, (geneology of the Khuman clan) edited by N. Khelchandra, *Angomlol* (MSS) (geneology of the Angom clan) *Chengleiron* (geneology of the Chenglei clan). edited by N. Amuyaim, *Chakparon*, (geneology of the Chakpas) edited by Angom Mangi, *Khabalon*, (geneology of the Khaba clan) *Sagai-Shalailon* (Clan-geneologies) *Meihourol Puya* give information about the social history of the Meitei clans.

The pre-Pakhangba chronicles which deal with a line of rules starting from Kangba is *Kangbaron* (chronicle of Kangba dynasty), *Kangla Shanglen Puba* (MSS) a gist of which is reproduced in N. Manijao, *Sandreibi Chaisra* (1978) also gives an account of the political history of Manipur valley before the emergence of Pakhangba.

On Pakhangba, a large number of manuscripts have been quoted by scholars on the subjects; of these a few have been published. *Pakhangba Phambal* (coronation of Pakhangba) (Kh.Yaima: 1967) *Poireiton Khunthokpa* (Migration or colonisation of Poreiton) (Yaima: 1972, *Pakhangba Nongkarol* : 1983), *Chakpa Khunta Khunthok* (The settlement of the Chakpas) deals with the conflict between Pakhangba and Khabas, *Chada Laihui* (an account of the queens and their connection with rulers), edited by N. Khelchandra (1967), *Naothingkhong Phampal Kaba* (Coronation of Naothingkhong) edited by the same author and translated into English by Ch. Manihar Singh (1983), *Leithak Leikharon* (a compendium of legends, traditions and some historical accounts on cosmogony, origin of the Meiteis and clans in Manipur) edited by Y.Bhagya Singh (1958) and Shakok Lamien deal with the cosmogony and origin of clans and early religious beliefs of the Meiteis. *Loiyamba Shilyen* edited by Chandrasekhar Singh (1968) is a remarkable royal decree on the social distribution of the economic occupation along with the administrative system of Manipur. *Mashin* edited by O. Bhogeswar Singh, *Phamlon* edited by N. Khelchandra deal with the administrative functions of the nobles and monarch.

On Manipur's conquest of Kabaw valley by Kyamba and Khikhomba, the *Pong king*, a semi historical work, the *Pong-Meitei Lamyen Lairik* or *Soraren Macha Khunkhumba* give important informations on Shan history and their relation with Manipur. *Sorarenmacha Khunkumba* was the Meitei version of Shan Chronicle.

In the seventeenth century, specially during the reign of Khagemba, there were a number of historical literatures which were written or rewritten on the patronage of the royal court. On religion, *Thiren Layat* edited by N. Ibochouba Singh (1983), Khagemba Yumlep, Khagemba Yangbi are relevant. *Nongshamei Puya* deals with migration of Muslim in Manipur. It was edited by O. Bhogeswar Singh and M.A. Janab Khan (1969). *Sanamahi Laikan* edited by O. Bhogeshwar Singh (1972) deals with the Sanskritisation of Manipur during the reign of Garibaniwaz. *Shamshok Ngamba* and *Takhel Ngamba* are historical works compiled during the reign of this king deal with the conquest of Shan states in Kabaw valley, war against Ava and Tripura. *Chingthangkhomba Ganga Chatpa* deals with the pilgrimage of Bhagyachandra to Bengal and was edited and published by R.K. Sanahal Singh (1958). There are accounts like *Khahi Ngamba* (Gambhir Singh's expedition to Khasi Hills), *Tilain Lal* (battle of Tilain). Of all the immigration books, *Bamon Khunthok* (Immigration of Brahmins) is most noteworthy.

Archaeological Sources: Historical Monuments

Lack of archaeological evidences has been the most regretted major gap in the historical studies in Manipur.¹⁸ Not many historical monuments have survived the devastating invasion of the Burmese in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The use of bricks was confined to the construction of temples, palaces and the fortresses, generally, timber, bamboo and thatch were the major housebuilding materials. The art of brick making was learnt from the Chinese settlers. Almost all monuments except one belong to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The most popular monument is the temple of Vishnu at Bishnupur in the south-west Imphal valley, which was once the capital of King Kyamba of the fifteenth century. This is the oldest brick structure in the kingdom. Other temples are the Krishna temple of king Charairongba at Brahmapur, Imphal, the Hanuman temple at Mahabali, Imphal, the old temple of Govindaji (in ruin) the Vrindavana Chandra temple of Tikendrajit inside the Kangla fort, the temples dedicated by Thangal Menjor and Leimapokpa Sajou Keirungba and the Sanamahi temple believed to have been constructed by Nara Singh in 1844. The tombs are also a class among the historical monuments, the tomb of Gambhir Singh at Kanchipur, the tombs of Maisnam Gourshyam Luwangthem, father of Queen Dowager Maharani Kumudini, mother of Chandrakirti Singh are two representative types of the nineteenth century. The ruins of the Kangla Fort, the ramparts and other structures are the relics of a bygone era. These stone and bricks ruins speak silently of the past of Manipur.

Inscriptions

W. Yumjao Singh was the pioneer archaeologist of Manipur who published the findings of his studies in his *Report on Archaeological studies in Manipur* in 1935 and he was followed by several individual scholars. Manipur State Museum, Mutua Museum and State Archaeology Department have discovered a large number of inscriptions which give some idea of the history of Manipur. These inscriptions are royal decrees or proclamations inscribed on stone, iron and copper plates. The contents of these inscriptions are of social, religious and political nature, though a few deal with cultural and economic matters. But inscriptions which have been discussed by

W.Yumjao, Mutua Bahadur, Th. Subol Singh, O.K. Singh, are not numerous; their historical value is quite well known.¹⁹

Stone Inscriptions

The earliest stone inscriptions are the three Khoibu inscriptions.²⁰ Khoibu is a Maring Naga village of Tegnoupal area bordering Kabaw Valley of Burma. It is situated on the hill route connecting Imphal valley and Burma. The first inscription was issued by King Sameirang and his brother Thamanglang of the fifth century. The first inscription runs as following: It is archaic Meitei script.

Khoibu Inscription - I

1st line	: Yourei Chanugi Sayane
Eng.	: Yaorei-women born-of
2nd line	: Sameirang Thamanglang Sai Konne
Eng.	: Sameirang Thamanglang protected
3rd line	: pu Maring Laisang (ba)
Eng.	: Maring pan temple or Abode of deity keeper
4th line	: (ba) La (i) gi mapu asida
Eng.	: Deity-of owner this
5th line	: Hamei semba Kei Ngaobarel
Eng.	: Yeast (wine) making tiger wild
6th line	: Touha te Khang-O.
Eng.	: Don't do know it.

Free Translation

Yaorei Chanu's sons Sameirang and Thamanglong protected Maring pan (Khoibu village) under care of the keeper of the abode of the deity. Know it that the making of yeast makes the tiger wild and it should not be done.

Khoibu Inscription - 2

The second inscription was issued by King Kiyamba. The stone is 3'-2" high, 2'-9" wide and 3" thick. The inscription runs thus :

1st line	: Shri Lainingthou Kiyambagi Yathangne
English	: Shri Godly king Kiyamba-of order
2nd line	: Mathangsoi Laisemba Lairemmagi
English	: Mathangsoi built goddess-of

- 3rd line : Surungne Warakonthoubana konlamba lai ne
 English : Cave Warakonthouba protected-deity
- 4th line : Mathangsoina leiseamlamle Nung-thang tharamle
 English : Mathangsoi built stone-dao cut (chiselled)
- 5th line : Sempung Semme Lai ahum tinna phamme
 English : gong made deity three meeting place
- 6th line : Khoibu panty Nongpok thonglen ngakbane
 English : Khoibu village eastern gate-by protected
- 7th line : Mathangsonna lumang samchin salai yenbane
 English : by-Mathangson lumang sanchin clan distributed
- 8th line : Khoibu Maring panta salai yenba aiba
 English : Khoibu Maring village (at) clan distribute head
- 9th line : Sanpha Naipha Mipha mibun toupayate
 English : Cattle-catching, slave-catching, man catching, tieing do not.
- 10th line : Kiyambana latlamba laine
 English : Kiyamba worshipped deity.

Free translation

This is godly king Kiyamba's decree. This is the cave-abode of the goddess, constructed by Mathangsoi (King) Warakonthonba who protected this deity. Mathangsoi constructed the cave; gong was made. This is the meeting place of these deities. Khoibu village is an outpost of eastern frontier Mathangsoi settled the Lumong Samchin clan. He was the chief of the clans of Khoibu village. Exempted from dues like cattle, slave and torture. This is a deity worshiped by Kiyamba.

Khoibu Inscription - 3

The third inscription was issued by PAIKHOMBA of the seventeenth century. The text runs thus :

- 1st line : Laining-thou Kiyambagi
 English : Godly King Kiyamba- of
- 2nd line : Yathangne, Chingthou Ghakembagi
 English : order-of King Khagemba of
- 3rd line : Yathangne, Khoibu panty lai
 English : order-of Khoibu village deity
- 4th line : sangbane sanpha-nipha mipha
 English : watching cattle catching, slave-catching-men catching

5th line	: mipun toupharoi chingbou
English	: man-tieing should not be done King
6th line	: Paikhomba nung yunglamme
English	: Paikhomba stone raised
7th line	: Uyung tharamme yimnam
English	: Oak tree planted Yimnam (Yumnam?)
8th line	: Ombaga Kuru Thi Akona
English	: Omba and Guru Thiakona (?)
9th line	: latlamme lainingthou Mayangngambagi
English	: worshipped godly king Mayangngamba of
10th line	: Yathangne Khoibu
English	: Order-of Khoibu
11th line	: Maring pantsi Lai sembane (Leisembane)
English	: Maring village deity made (created)
12th line	: ayeiba apunba aphaba
English	: beating, tieing arrest
13th line	: tou pharoi choina pana tha (bek)
English	: should not be done astray Panna service
14th line	: (tha) bak sokpharoi
English	: service not touched
15th line	: Srijut Kiyambane lat
English	: Srijut Kiyamba-by
16th line	: (lat) lamba laine
English	: worshipped deity.

Free Translation

"This is godly King Kiyamba's order. Khoibu village is the keeper of the deity. The villagers should not be tortured. King Paikhomba raised this stone and planted oak trees. Yumnam Omba and Guru Thiakona (?) worshipped the deity. This is the order of godly King Mayangngamba (a title of Paikhomba) Khoibu Maring village constructed the abode of the deity. They are exempted from the Panna (Lallup?) service and should not be subjected to other state duties and torture. Srijut Kiyamia worshiped this deity."

The stone inscription at the abode of goddess Konthoujam Lairemma was issued by King Charairongba for the maintenance of the deity. A stone inscription with the image of Hanuman was discovered at the Kangla moat. The Meitei characters cannot be deciphered as they are badly defaced; may be of the 18th century.

The inscriptions of other rulers with royal insignia of the mythical dragon-lion and symbolic royal footprints engraved on them are also

found; the prominent being the Kohima inscription of Raja Gambhir Singh 1832, Noney inscription of Maharaja Chourjit Singh, 1813 Tipaimukh inscription of Pamheiba, Akhui inscription of Bhagyachandra, Tuivai-inscription of Chandrakirti. The Wangoi inscription of Maharaja Marjit Singh of 1817 A.D. was issued on the occasion of the inauguration of a market. Another inscription of Marjit of 1815 A.D. recording the construction of the brick pillars and the ramparts of the Kangla royal fortress was found in Assam Rifle's compound. W. Yumjao refers to other stone inscriptions at Chingmeirong hill (Chourjit Singh), Shrivani, Koirengei (Chandrakirti) Loiing Hill (Jai Singh) Kharam palli (Chandrakirti). We do not find the trace of these inscriptions except that of Loiing and Kharam palli. These inscriptions are written in Meitei, Bengali, Assamese scripts.

Coins

The coins of Manipur so far discovered during the last fifty years are a very important source of information.²¹ W. Yumjao Singh discovered two silver coins with Sanskrit legends, perhaps an indication of trade with India in the third century. Coins were made of bell metal, silver and gold. The earliest coin so far discovered belonged to Wurakonhouba. The coins were issued by Khagemba, Paikhomba, Charairongba, Garibaniwaz, Jai Singh, Chourjit, Gambhir Singh. Mutua Bahadur has collected very valuable coins. A recent discovery of coin of Garibaniwaz which describes him as Mekhleswar has, as stated in the previous chapter, confirmed that another name of Manipur during Garibaniwaz was Mekhle. Gold coins of Gambhir Singh show the economic condition of Manipur at the time.

Sculpture

Several sculptures mostly iconographs have been discovered.²² Earliest sculptures are the Buddhist statues collected at several places like Kakching, Utlou, Tera, Langthabal, Nongmaijing hills. Votive stupa made of granite is also found. These sculptures reflect the prevalence of Buddhism in the kingdom of Manipur as the Shans of Kabaw valley who became the subjects of the kingdom were Buddhists from the middle of the fifteenth century during the reign of king Kiyamba. Bodhisatvas were worshipped as Siva by local people.

Numerous are the icons of Hindu pantheon, like Matsya Avatar of Vishnu, Siva, Ganesh, Kartikeya, Bhairava, Hanuman, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Narasimha, and Varaha avatars of Vishnu, Vamana, Krishna, Balaram, Subhadra etc.²³ A recent discovery of gilded mask of a human skull and a statue of a horse with a parasol but without a rider found at Chingjing hillock at Imphal point to the existence of Buddhist elements.

Archaeological Evidences: Khanghui, Tharon and Napachik

W. Yumjao Singh did the first excavation in 1932 at Jainagar or Shangathen and Susa Kameng villages in Manipur valley. Then the prehistoric sites like the famous Khangkhui cave in Ukhrul, Tharon caves in Tamenglong and other rock shelter like Behiang were excavated by O.K. Singh and his colleagues. Prehistoric stone tools of the paleolithic and neolithic period have been discovered. The recent excavations at Napachik in southern Imphal valley have shown a neolithic cultural site.²⁴ Several neolithic celts were discovered both in the valley and hills.

Foreigners' Accounts

Foreign sources include Greek, Chinese and Burmese literary works over and above the British archival records and papers of the Christian missions. The Greek sources on Manipur are Ptolemy's *Geography of Further India* and the *Periplus of the Erytherian Sea*. Gerini has made an attempt to identify the toponyms and ethnonyms of north east India and upper Burma. The Chinese annals, Shan and Burmese chronicles like Maharajavamsa, and Green Glass Palace chronicle give information on the Manipur Burma relations. In Manipur, the state archives, papers of the Political Agency, Hill Bench of the Manipur State Durbar, and that of the Durbar give very useful information on modern Manipur.²⁵

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Prehistory and Proto-history

How old is man and his culture in Manipur? The answer to this big question has to be made with the “help of the spade and shovel of the archaeologists”.¹ And prehistory is the study of man and his culture before the so called recorded history. Prehistory has also been described as the text free history of man. The source materials for the reconstruction of prehistory are the material culture objects like stone, bone tools and weapons, potteries, plants and animal remains. In Manipur such prehistoric cultural objects have been discovered the study of which enables the historian and archaeologist to reconstruct the stone-age, both old and new, cultures in Manipur. Though archaeological research in the area is still not fully developed, there are evidences of the Old Stone Age, New Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age cultures in Manipur. The evidences of the Old Stone Age (Paleolithic) and New Stone Age (Neolithic) are still scanty but it has been suggested by competent archaeologists that Manipur being located in the geographical and cultural corridor...between South and South East Asia holds promises for national as well as global archaeological interests.² Geologically and geographically Manipur is situated on the tertiary ranges of the branch of eastern Himalayas going down the south and is a part of the compact physiographic unit following the great divide between the Brahmaputra and the Chindwin valleys. Manipur along with the adjoining areas of Nagaland, Mizoram and Assam forms a geographical and cultural bridge between the east and west. The North East India holds the key to the understanding the scope, depth and dimension and cultural diffusion between South and South East Asia which played the crucial role in transforming the North East Indian ethnographic canvas from prehistoric times.

Further, there are a number of caves and rocks shelters in the hills of Manipur which once provided shelters to the prehistoric men. While the evidence of Old Stone Age is confined to the hills, the New Stone Age relics are spread over the hills and valley. It has been stated that Imphal valley may be an important zone of copper-bronze age culture which is a cultural phase of great significance in human history, but still unknown in the entire north east India. Manipur appears to have received Bronze Age culture traits from Thailand and upper Burma where indigenous early metal age culture developed at a comparatively early date around 4000 B.C.³

Old Stone Age: Khangkhui Caves

Khangkhui Caves are located near Khangkhui, a Tangkhul Naga village at a distance of eleven kilometers south east of Ukhrul bordering upper Burma. The existence of the four caves was quite widely known to local people and the administrators. Many people, mostly young boys and girls used to enter the caves as an adventure excursion. Reference to the caves has been made by several explorers including Kingdom F. Ward, the botanist-naturalist. It was O.K. Singh, a young archaeologist of Manipur to whom credit should be given for a systematic archaeological excavations and our knowledge of the prehistory of Manipur is more or less based on his studies and excavations. It was he who did the first excavation at Khangkhui caves on scientific line. On the publication of his findings in 1969, Manipur has been included in the 'Prehistory map' of the region.⁴ Khangkhui caves are limestone caves. O.K. Singh's excavation found out stone, bone tools and animal remains⁵ which are sufficient evidences of habitation of stone age men in these caves.⁶ T.C. Sharma observes, "on the basis of cultural materials consisting of stone and bone tools in addition to faunal remains, it can be argued that Khangkhui cave yielded evidences of upper or late Paleolithic period. The first evidence of the pleistocene man in Manipur dating back to about 30,000 B.C."⁷ The Khangkhui finds have been compared with the Kurnool finds and out of this comparison the above tentative dating has been made.

Other caves like Hundung caves, another limestone cave, 11km. south of Ukhrulo did not yield any find. The Purul cave in Purul, a Mao village in north Manipur did not yield any find, so also the Song Ring rock shelter of Beyang village of Tengnoupal.⁸

Machi Find: Pebble Chopper

One of the most valuable finds of O.K. Singh is the pebble chopper (tool) found on a hill top of the Maring Naga village of Machi in Chandel district. The Marings are the one of the oldest tribes of Manipur. This find has been considered as a land mark in the paleolithic archaeology of Manipur as it confirms beyond doubt that Manipur was inhabited by Stone Age ancestors since the early stone or the lower paleolithic period.⁹

New Stone Age: Hoabinhian Culture

A large number of neolithic celts have been discovered throughout Manipur and preserved in D.M. College Anthropology Department Museum, Manipur State Museum and State Archaeology Department. These celts are believed by the hill tribes of possessing magico-religious value. They are regarded as "thunder bolts" by them and used for oath-taking and medicinal purposes. The celts are mostly edge ground pebble and flake tools. Potteries of different designs of the same culture have been found. These evidences have clearly established the fact of the existence of the New Stone Age (neolithic) culture in Manipur.

Tharon Caves

The first concrete evidence of Hoabinhian culture is represented by the finds of the caves at Tharon in Tamenglong district. Hoabinhian culture is the mesolithic cultural pattern of south east Asia, based on the historic finds of village of Hoabinhi in north Vietnam. The similar relics are found in Thailand (Spirit caves), Burma and other places in the south east Asia.

Tharon is a Liangmei Naga village and the caves were first explored in December, 1979 by the State Archaeology Department, though the caves are quite well known to the local people for a long time. The explorers discovered five caves and rock shelters.

The Cave site is located at 93.32' longitude and 25.3' latitude in the midst of thickly forested Reyangling hills at a distance of about 4km. towards the north of Tharon village. Locally the caves is called Kalemki (Kalem=bat : Ki=house) = That is the house of bat. The altitude of the cave site is 976 meters above mean sea level. During the

exploration at the site, five caves/rock shelters were discovered. A stream Kalem-ki-magu is following near these caves. The rock type of the area is sandstone of Barail series. These caves and rock shelters were probably formed due to rock weathering.

"One cave is very long, looks like a curved tunnel and one end of which opens towards the stream, beside the cave branches into fourteen passages and is completely dark; exploration is very difficult. Upstream from this cave opening, there is another underground passage, on the right side of the stream which connects the entrance cave. At a short distance towards downstream, there is another cave facing the stream. While exploring near the stream in front of this cave, edge ground pebble tools including a flake tool were collected. On the northern side of the entrance cave at a little higher altitude, there is a rock shelter facing north west; in front of which is a narrow plateau. Just opposite to the rock shelter across the plateau, there are two other rock shelters facing south east. The floor of these caves/rock shelters are filled with sandstone slabs that fall from the roofs and walls, as a result, the height inside caves and rock shelters are low and no artifacts could be collected from inside. At a distance of about 1.6 Km. towards the south west of this cave site a stream called Fiyanggu is flowing. During the exploration of the stream course, rock engravings on the anthromorphic figures were discovered. These engravings have similarity with the folk art of the Kabui Naga".¹¹

The Tharon Caves, believed to be the house of the ancestors of the Liangmei Nagas, dwelt by the spirits, is the subject of many legends and traditions of the Zelianrong people of Tamenglong. These edge-ground pebble tools are similar with the finds from Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Philippines. In these countries, these tools were used at about 7000-8000 B.C. In the Garo hills, Meghalaya, the edged ground pebble tool-culture flourished around 5000 B.C. The Tharons have distinct affinity with the Hoabinhian culture. In this case, before the advent of the present Tibeto-Burman inhabitants of the area, the Proto-Austroloid must have been in occupation of these caves. The proposed date is around 5000-4000 B.C.¹² These are local traditions of dwelling in caves in the legendary past.

Napachik

A stone age site of second millennium B.C.¹³ Napachik is a small hillock near the Meitei village of Wangu in the southern part of Imphal

valley, located on the right bank of the Manipur river which flows into Chindwin river in Burma. In 1979, a neolithic celt was unearthed on the south west slope of the hillock which is 18.5 metre high. The excavation of the hillock was carried out in 1981 under the supervision of O.K. Singh. The site was dug up through seven layers.

Finds of Napachik

In the first layer, two pieces of modern pottery and a kerosene tin are found and there is no lithic artifact except angular sandstone pieces and a quartz crystal but a pointed base reddish brown tripod leg and a few potsherds of reddish brown and grey corded wares. In the third also pot-sherds of reddish brown, grey and dark grey corded wares are found. In the fourth layer are found "a grinding stone, flakes, edge ground knife made on context flake, a small flat pebble scrapers and corded wares and tripod legs are found. The wares are reddish, brown, grey, dark grey and whitish in colour", and marked sherd from this layer has been dated 1450 B.C. In the fifth layer are found "pieces of charcoal, corded ware, tripod legs, a pebble chopper flake, and a broken piece of ground tool. The sixth layer has a 'small pebble chopper and corded ware, tripod legs as well". From the seventh and last layer, only "potsherds including corded ware are found". The excavations have yielded very interesting finds like potsherds and lethal tools. There are 783 pieces of potsherds, (346 plain and 437 corded) whereas the lithic types (pebble and flake tools and stone tools) include 2 chopper, 1 scupper, three flakes, one edge ground knife, one broken grinding stone, 2 ground and polished celts and 18 other unspecified pieces which may be classified as pebble and flake tools.

The potteries are decorated with cordmarks and of reddish brown and grey colour. They are slipped and the inside are burnished due to use. The sherds are firm in texture and range from medium to thin in thickness. They are handmade and shaped by beating with a cord wrapped pad. The discovery of fortytwo tripod legs of varied types indicate that the wares had legs.

Affinity

O.K. Singh has made a comparison between the Napachik finds with the tools of Hoabinhian culture of Burma as reported by H.L. Movias (1943 : Stone Age of Burma), P.I. Boriskovsky (1978) and Gorman (1977). The pottery of Napachik has affinity with those of neolithic

culture of China, though no painted pottery which is a characteristic features of Chinese neolithic culture has been found at Napachik.

The edge ground tools and corded wares of Napachik have affinity with the edge ground tools and corded wares of the Spirit Cave of Thailand, Padubtin Cave of Burma, and Hoabinhian sites in Vietnam, but in one of the Hoabinhian sites, tripod wares are found. And tripod wares are characteristic of the Chinese neolithic culture. A similar tripod vase was found in Thailand and dated 1400-1800 B.C. according to Sorensen and the type of pottery originated from north China according to G.C. Sievcsky,¹⁴ and the possible dating of neolithic age in north east India is between 5000 B.C. early neolithic to 200 B.C. late neolithic age according to T.C. Sharma.

The explorer himself concludes "Type-technologically the cultural materials from Napachik can be divided into two phases. The small chipped pebble tools with inclined plain strikingplatform and edge ground knife as convex flake which are of the Hoabinhian character may represent the earlier phase, while the latter phase represented by the fully ground celt and the hand made cord marked pottery and tripod vase. The materials of these two phases have been mixed up due to the redepositing in the slope wash. However, this is subject to confirmation with future wares"¹⁵

Regarding the date of Napachik, it is remarked, "The materials at Napachik being found in the slope wash it is difficult to establish a definite chronological sequence of the cultural materials. However, it is quite likely that while a culture that has affinity with the Hoabinhian tool complex of south east Asia continued, a full neolithic culture equipped with ground and polished celts and handmade corded tripod wares which have affinity with the Chinese neolithic culture arrived at Napachik around second millennium B.C."¹⁶ Thus, Manipur valley was already inhabited by the neolithic men in or around 2000 B.C.

Who were the markers of the paleolithic and neolithic culture? The Hoabinhian cultural traits point to the Austroloid who migrated to Manipur before the advent of the Tibeto-Burman Mongoloid who followed them around 1000 B.C.

Megalithic Culture

Megaliths both of stone and wooden are raised by the Naga and Kuki tribes in the hills. Stone megaliths are found among the Naga tribes like, Mao, Maram, Zemi, Liangmei, Rongmei, Tangkhul, Maring, Anal

and others. The stone megaliths of Willong village have been described as the stone-henge of the Nagas by T.C. Hodson. Stone Megaliths are victory memorials, ceremonial status stones and memorials for the dead. Dolmen and Menhirs are also found in Imphal valley. The stones at Makhel and Kezakenoma are memorials marking the point of dispersal of the migrating Naga tribes. The stone megaliths of Salangthel which are the relics of a Rongmei Naga village which have been recently discovered are a class in itself. Stone and megaliths wooden megaliths of the Tangkhul are also quite impressive.

The above mentioned caves and rocks shelters provided homes for the food gathering hunter-tribesmen who used lithic tools. Most of the tribes of Manipur have the legends of their origination from caves or subterranean region — which are the echo of their cave dwelling days.

Legendary Period

Goethe, the German poet said, “the historian’s duty is to separate the truth from the false, the certain from the uncertain”. In the light of this dictum, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the early history of ancient Manipur. There is a confusion of myth with history. Like the Puranic literatures of ancient India, the chronicles of neighbouring Burma and the annals of the ancient Chinese, the Manipuri chronicles and other ancient texts attempt to assign divinity to historical figures on oft repeated pretext of incarnation and historicity to legendary and mythical personalities and incidents. Understandably, therefore, the reconstruction of the history encounters the vexing problem of separating the myth from facts and locating the historical in the myriad of legends, traditions, folklores and narratives. This is a reflection of the philosophy of history or attitude towards the past developed by the priest-scholars-advisors of the Meitei kings. Myths were created to connect their patrons with the divinities of the heaven to ensure total political, social, religious and cultural subjugation of the subjects to the ruling dynasty. The purpose of their controlled and supervised ‘history’ was to provide the divine legitimacy to their rulers and ensure the safety of their future. This is reflected both in the pre-Hindu and post-Hindu “Histories” of Manipur. In the pre-Hindu history, the royalty was regarded as an incarnation of Pakhangba, the divine king who outwitted his more capable brother Sanamahi who is worshipped as an universal god in every household.

The Pakhangba-Sanamahi cult which provided the foundation of the Meitei theocratic system dominated the Meitei concept of the past, the

present and the future. After conversion into Hinduism, over and above the two divinities, Hindu God Visnu in the form of Lord Krisna, influenced the concept of the origin, history and even polity of the Meiteis as clearly seen in the Sanskritisation of the country. This perhaps lies in the inner depth of the Meitei mind which is emotional, patriotic and devotional rather than being rational or critical. An attempt has been made to portray the ethno-history of the people. Ethnohistory is the people or folk's view of their woven past. Therefore, despite the lack of history, the Meitei view of the creation and origin of their habitation and evolution of religious beliefs and state formation has been presented in the following paragraphs which constitute the legendary and proto history of the Meiteis.

The Meitei Cosmogony

The cosmic evolution as visualised by the ancient Meiteis is preserved in their traditions which were written down in the historical time.¹⁷ In the beginning, there was empty darkness. The Supreme God of the Meiteis, known by different names, Taipangpanba Mapu, Lord of the Universe, Taibirel Sidaba, the greatest soul immortal, Atiya Sidaba, Immortal Lord of the Space (Sky), Atiya Sidaba, Immortal Lord of the Sky,¹⁸ wished to create the universe, gods and living beings.¹⁹ Supreme God brought forth Atingkok. Seven colours of the rainbow were created.²⁰ Then Atiya Sidaba was brought forth from Himself and Atingkok was instructed to entrust him (Atiya Sidaba) with the work of creation and he was called Ashiba (one who was given an errand from Meitei shiba = being on an errand) Atingkok created the stars, planets and other heavenly bodies, Atiya Sidaba was asked to create the earth. Water was created by him but he could not create the earth. He consulted Supreme God who showed the whole universe in His mouth²¹ Moss and water hyacinth were created; then a tortoise was created. On the back of the tortoise in the water, the earth was created and as it was of a very small size, it could not survive and turned into cloud. The floating broken pieces of earth were collected by Atiya and out of them was created an eel. With the advice of the Supreme Lord, another earth was created. It was destroyed again and the pieces of earth turned into snow. Then Atiya Sidaba created a black beetle which was sent to the Supreme God for further instruction. With the final advice, the earth was created.²² Then from the body of the Supreme God were brought forth, the gods and goddessess who ultimately

constitute the members of the Meitei heavenly pantheon. Nine gods and seven goddesses levelled the uneven earth which was made habitable.²³ Atiya Sidaba, Ashiba and Konjin Tuthokpa which was created later on, created the spirits, and demons, animals, birds and beasts. The goddess which created the animals was known as Sinu Leima Leitangningtha. And Khongchi Nungleipan was the goddess of fishes.²⁴

Creation of Man

Atiya Sidaba asked Ashiba to create man. He created a Ngamu fish which was rejected. His second creation of a frog was not accepted. Then he created monkey which did not satisfy Him. Ultimately, Ashiba was asked to create man in the image of God (Atiya Sidaba). Then form of man was thus created but there was no life. Atiya Sidaba breathed life into the form and man was thus created. The fish, frog and the monkey were left in the water, land and trees respectively.

The First Divine King

Men inhabited the earth; the two gods Ashiba and Konjin Tuthokpa who were all created by the Supreme God were asked to go around the universe. And whoever first completed the journey would be made the King of the earth.²⁵ Ashiba went around the earth but Konjin Tuthokpa did not go. He went around the pedestal of Atingkok Sidaba which was the universe itself. And he was made the King of earth. Ashiba came back after his successful journey and were shocked and annoyed to find Konjin Tuthokpa as having been nominated as the king by Supreme God. There was a great tension but Supreme God came up from the netherland and distributed offices among the two. Konjin Tuthokpa was, of course, the king and made to reign the earth from Heikruching. Ashiba was made an important household god. Konjin Tuthokpa prostrated before him for blessing. He was hesitant, then the Supreme God thundered with the expression of His anger, the universe was made to tremble. He blessed and entrusted him to cooperate with Konjin Tuthokpa.

In a more popular version, Ashiba was known as Kuptreng and Konjin Tuthokpa was called Sentreng. Kuptreng and Sentreng are other names. They were two sons of Atiya Guru Sidaba and his consort Leimaren Sidabi, the Immortal Mother goddess. There was an episode

which was narrated in this tradition that one Atiya Guru Sidaba floated down a river in the form of a dead cow to test the devotion and wisdom of his two sons. Ashiba or Kuptreng or Sanamahi thought that the cow was already dead and stinking. But Konjin Tuthokpa or Sentreng knew that it was their father and pulled up the dead carcass and performed the funeral rites,²⁶ according to Leithak Leikharon and were distributed to the seven clans. Sentreng was known henceforth as Pakhangba (one who knows his father). Then Sanamahi and Pakhangba were asked by Atiya Guru Sidaba to join in the succession competition of going around the Universe. Sanamahi enthusiastically went around the universe while Pakhangba could not go as he was a weaker brother. Finding him in a sad mood, his mother Leimaren Sidabi advised him to go around the pedestal of his father. Pakhangba did and was made the king by Atiya Guru Shidaba. Sanamahi came back and was so furious and was prepared to kill his brother for the alleged deception. Their father came out from the netherland and pacified him with the status of an important god to be worshipped in every household.

The tradition of Pakhangba as the divine King of the earth and Sanamahi as spiritual deity of the Meiteis perhaps was a myth created by rulers of Ningthouja dynasty founded by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba in the later historical time to give a garb of divinity to the king. Sanamahi as the spiritual divinity and Pakhangba as the royal divinity were the basis of the Sanamahi-Pakhangba cult propagated by the Ningthouja dynasty.

Early Rulers

The early history of Manipur which is more or less proto-historical in nature is still very sketchy as the different texts which claim to be chronicles and geneologies of the clans contain only the names of the rulers who ruled in Manipur in different periods in ancient times. Of these literary texts, Kangbalon which is claimed to be a work of the reign of Khuyoi Tompok, give an account of eight rulers as they were succeeding one another and connected by blood relationships. Shakok Lamlen gives a brief reference to four rulers who ruled in four periods of history. Such a period or age was known as 'chak' which is a phonetic corruption of the Sanskrit 'yug'. According to tradition, there are four chaks, but the available texts contain the name of five chaks, viz., Hayi, Haya, Langba, Khunung and Konna. (It is believed that Khunung must have been a later interpolation). There is a possibility

that this particular form of periodization of history was a later adoption. It will be irrelevant to give the geneologies of the rulers in order of the four or five chaks: Leithak Leikharon gives the names of nearly 30 rulers. Very interesting is the text provided by Khagemba Yumlep, a seventeenth century work; there are given 36 kings in Hayi Chak, and 37 rulers in the Khunung chak before the big flood which devastated Manipur valley. The controversial Wakoklon Thilel Amailon Pulol, compiled in the late sixteenth century which is regarded as fundamental chronicle by the scholars of the Sanamahi religious cult gives the name of rulers which are common with other texts except two earliest rulers of Mangang clan. The geneologies of different clans do not contain any significant political rulers before Kuptreng and Sentreng, though the ancestors of the clans who were not rulers are mentioned. They are very important in reconstructing the social history of the Meiteis.

Kangba, the First King.²⁷

Kangba was the first king about whom the chronicles give some details.²⁸ He belonged to Mangang clan which was the precursor of Ningthouja clan. He was born at Koubru hills in north west of Manipur valley. He was the son of Tangja Lila Pakhangba who finds mention in several traditions and texts including Pakhangba Phambal. Kangba married Leima Taretnu of the Chenglei clan. His capital was at Kanga-mung or Kanga-pung. His period was in the stage of the civilisation of the food gatherers in way of life. According to Kangbalon, "rice in lumps is found hanging at Wakonthi chakson pung. The place where the whole people came together to join the eating was called Kangchapi-o". There is a place called Kangjabi at present Imphal. Salt was available at a brine at Thumnambi. Fish was found hanging from the trees, meat was found hanging from the trees. Cloth was taken from the bark of the trees. Wine was also abundant.²⁹

The King looked after the prosperity and happiness of his subjects. The King introduced the worship of the image of God Sanamahi. Justice was decided by a flag planted before the temple which withstood the force of the blowing wind. During his reign according to Kangbalon, some families were established and named after the king, namely, Kangcham, Kangucham and Kang-naga senpam. However, Shakok Lamlen says that there was no clan formed yet.³⁰

Kangba had nine sons, namely, Koikoi, Teima, Yangma, Tesot, Urenkhuba, Urenhanba, Irem Khabi and Langba who went out to

different places to establish principalities. During the reign of Kangba, there was no disease; the dead was neither buried nor cremated. The dead bodies were picked up by a king of birds named Kaklen Mingamba and dropped into a river at Heibok in south Imphal. It was the disposal of the dead by exposure to birds and beasts. The people worshipped God Sanamahi and their religion was belief in truth and justice. "Truth means", according to Shakok Lamlen, "the knowledge and realisation of Sanamahi". The name of the country was called Tillokoktong Leikoipung and Hanna Semba Konna Loiba (Beginning first and ending last). The longevity of human life was four hundred years. Kangba is represented by the chronicle to have reigned four hundred and sixty years which were fictitious figures. He might have reigned little more than fifty years. He died by drowning at Pakhangba Iren Imphal river. He was succeeded by fourteen rulers of the Hayi chak according to Thiren Layat,³¹ namely Ningthou-naga, Ko-ngouba, Tari, Khamlangphaba, Nongdamhanba, Akaba, Tarangba, A-ngar, Tanou-nang, Tanou-chi, Kaklenshi, Meirongaba, Leithongkhong-Khaplou, Karouhanba, then another set of nobles is mentioned both in Thiren Layat and Leithak Leikharon,³² namely, Lampu, Tupu, (Taret) Laikam, Nemda, Soita, Laimeikak, Tilmeikak and Tharong Loiren. Of these rulers, the former set of rulers might be historical, there are mention of Tari Khamlangphaba, Nongdamhan in other chronicles. But the later rulers are said to have been covered by the "age of Sanamahi". They were more or less mythical rulers interpolated later on. They were still in the food gathering stage of civilisation.

Moriya Phambalcha or Maliya Phambalcha

The next important king whose historicity was fully established was Maliya (Moriya) Phambalcha.³³ According to Kangbalon, Koikoi, the first son of Kangba ascended the throne assuming the regnal title of Moriya Phambalcha, Wakoklon Thilel Amailon Pukon places him as a successor of Kangba. Other sources specially Shakok Lamlen place him in the beginning of a later age, Hayachak, so also Thiren Layat. He was represented as an incarnate of Kangba himself, therefore, it is thought that he was not a son on successor of the first Kangba. (There are references to two Kangbas). He married a chakpa girl named Lei-oi Nung-oibi. There was plenty and prosperity in the land. The people were deeply religious minded and remained contented. The Chakpas, an ethnic group was settled in Manipur. The names of the families

were Koikoibam, Keirambam and Koirakpam. He had a son named 'Pong'. When this prince was of fifteen years of age, he went to the eastern hills and settled among the Pongs, a group of Mau, Shans in Upper Burma.³⁴

Era of Maliya Phambalcha ?

The Sanamahi cult scholars are trying to popularise the era of Maliya Phambalcha which was supposed to have been fixed during the reign of this king in 1397 B.C. The manner of fixation of this date was based on a reference in a sixteenth century document known as Wakoklon Thilel Amailol Pukok compiled in 1588 A.D. during the reign of King Mungyamba of Manipur. This chronicle mentions that it was compiled in 2985 the year of Maliya Phambalcha. Deducting 1588 A.D. from 2985 one gets 1397 B.C. (985-1588 A.D. = 1397 B.C.)³⁵ Many scholars and calendar makers have started using this era. But it is very doubtful whether Maliya Phambalcha was a ruler in second millennium before Christ.³⁶

He was followed by nearly nineteen rulers till the joint reign of Nongdamhan and Taohuirang according to Thiren Layat,³⁷ among whom many were historical figures. The rulers were Pongthanglen Ponghanba, Chengba, Khomei, Kaksa, Wousa, Ngang-Cheng, Miraba, Nungkong Maharaba, Heirongang, Ngangningsing, Ngamba Naha, Leikoi and the Nongdamhan and Taohuireng.

Joint Rule of Nongdamhan and Taohuireng: A Slave Rebellion?

The chronicle refers to two brothers Nongdamhan and Taohuireng who became joint rulers. There is an ancient text called *Numit Kappa* (Shooting of the Sun) which compares the two brothers as the two suns.³⁸ *Numit Kappa* is not a purely historical work, but it is a hymn used for a rite known as Chupsaba, sometimes sung as a ballad narrating an historical event of rebellion against the oppressive rule of the two brother-kings. The two suns were called Khommadon Aton and Taohuireng who were no other persons than Nongdamhan and Taohuireng of Thiren Layat.³⁹ *Numit Kappa* refers to three brothers who died premature before them. Nongdamhan ruled the land with the help of his brother Taohuireng. It is said that "one sun shines at day time and another sun shines at night time" and the slaves and nobles had to attend the double duties. Therefore, the joint rule of the two

brothers was oppressive. There was one slave named Ekma Haotangla of Khwai-Nungjengbam family who had to attend the royal court day and night and consequently he was very much disgruntled over this excessive duty.

"Now the Sun and his brother Taohuireng rose and set alternately. There was a man who had a slave, a lazy churn named Ekma Haodongla, (Haotanglen) who was wroth because the suns rose and set alternately. He said, "I am a slave and twice I have to fetch wood and twice to bring in my master's paddy on my head. I cannot rear my children. I cannot see my wife"⁴⁰ It was Ekma Haotangla in Numit Kappa who made a bow and arrow out of the bamboo taken from the uncle of his wife. He made an intensive practice of shooting the arrow. He was in course of time so proficient that his arrow pierced through the pitcher on the head of his wife, and killed a wild boar and a python. One day, when the king left, his brother Taohuireng came riding on a horse. Haotangla shot his arrow which hit the horse and Taohuireng fell down and was wounded near a Maring Village. Taohuireng fled and in course of his flight he passed through Wangching (Wangjing), Tentha and Tekcham. ⁴¹ This shooting was reported to the King. Now this was taken as a rebellion against the king by the slave of Khwai Nungjenba who had perhaps moral sympathy with his slave. The king was frightened and fled the capital and hid himself in a cave. Taohuireng also went into hiding. In the absence of the monarch, the country was in complete chaos and anarchy and the people were in a gloom. They could not lead a normal life. Then the ten-regional chiefs (Ningthou Pongba Tara) viz., Nongpok Wangpurel, Khana chaopa, Thangjing, Sampurel, Loyarakpa, Kaobru, Kaoburel and Marjing, ⁴² decided to intervene for calling back the king to the throne. With the help of priestesses and singers of Thangjing of Moirang, Nongmaiching, Khumal and Mangang, the king who was greatly shocked at the plot by the slave was persuaded to come out of his hiding and take up the reigns of the government. At last, the king came out and was restored to his throne by the ten-regional chiefs. There was reconciliation between the King and rebel leaders. Khwai Nungjinba was given a position in the court with the title of the Chief of Khwai Nungjengbam lineage. ⁴³

The narrative in an allegorical form is a hymn sung in a ballad form sometimes gives an account of the reign of the two brothers, oppression and revolt by the oppressed class of people, the slaves, the chaos and confusion associated with the absence of the monarchy, intervention of

the ten-regional chiefs and restoration to the throne and reconciliation. The royalty tries to show their indispensibility but the necessity of support of the regional chieftains and common people for the monarchy is well depicted in this tradition.

After Taohuireng, Thiren Layat mentions ten names of rulers of Khunung Chak, viz., Nungmu-Kangba, Nunghuireng, Nungtaren, Michaku, Leitangla, Ponglinghanba, Leihing Ngamba, Keiphaba, Taibangchanba, Machong and Apanba of these, Ponglinghanba and Apanba might have been rulers as they are mentioned in some other texts also. In Langba chak, there are twelve rulers referred to in Thiren Layat. Sansenba was followed Chingya Chingmu Ningthou, Mikonhan (about whom nothing is known), Sakakpa and Wankakpa (perhaps they were rulers of earlier period as they are mentioned to have been rulers of the Haya Chak in Khagemba Yumlep as mentioned above). Then came Kaksuba.

Kaksuba

According to Kangbalon, Kaksuba succeeded Moriya Phambalcha. But in our opinion, he ruled long after him. Thiren Layat places him in Langba Chak which is of a later period. Kaksuba ascended the throne at the age of 26 years. He married Urum Khouchaubi of the Chenglei clan. During his reign, the agricultural lands of the king were maintained by the slaves.

Kaksuba was a worshipper of God Sanamahi, popularly known at that time at Sarish. He established abodes of deities at Langol hills near the present Imphal city. Some astronomical knowledge about the heavenly bodies like, sun, stars, planets was developed during his reign. The country was prosperous and bountiful.

He had two sons : the elder was Ton-Konba. During the year of his birth, Kaksuba reclaimed a swampy lake for development of an agricultural field. It was called Kakwa and it was dedicated to goddess Panthoibi. In his reign, the families of Kakwanthem, Kongbam Kenlon were established. He ruled according to Kangbalon for 320 years. He might have ruled for about forty years. He died during a hunting expedition to Koubru hills.

Tonkonba:

Introduction of Burial and Discovery of paddy

Tonkonba succeeded his father Kaksuba. He married a Chakpa girl, Tarangnu, daughter of Khamlang Phaba. In his reign the burial of the

dead was introduced. The name of the country was called Mura Pongthoklom Lamthak Sharon-pung. During the exploration of the forests and swamps for food and eatable vegetables, a wild paddy called Morshi Thangyi was discovered at Akampat, a marshy area in south east Imphal. The people were very happy at this discovery. The king had one daughter named Khabí Leinaotabi and one son named Pitingkoi. The families of Tongbram and Tongkam were established in his reign. He had a reign of 210 years, which is incredible.

Pitingkoi

Pitingkoi ascended the throne after the death of his father. His wife was called Atenubi. It is said that Pitingkoi was a deeply religious king. He was always engaged in religious pursuit and discovery of sacred religious places in his kingdom. He worshipped at the abodes of Korou Nongcha and Nongpok Ningthou where he, with divine instruction discovered the image of Sanamahi which was earlier worshipped by King Kangba. This deity was known at that time as Sari. This king ruled 250 years, which is just a tall claim.

Lambicha

Pitingkoi was succeeded by his son, Lambicha. During his reign the Kingdom was known as Muwapalli. So his title was Muwa Ningthou, King of Muwa. Like his father, he was a religious man. He was not interested in marriage and engaged himself in religious pursuit and searching religious places in his kingdom. He explored the Langol hills and constructed his palace over this hill. During his reign, a spiritual preceptor Mangang Lainingsing Ahanba was meditating at Laijing hills in south west Imphal. According to his advice, 108 religious places were discovered at Langol hills and these sacred places were maintained. Later on, perhaps at the pressure of the people, he married a princess named Leima Tanou and a son was born, he was named Sopaiba. The families of Lantham, Langkoncham, Lanleppam, Lankam and Laisharam were established. Kangbalon says that the reign of Lambicha marks the advent of Hayichak. This is not possibly correct as many other sources put him in Langaba-chak.

Sopaiba

Sopaiba succeeded Lambicha. He was in search of a place where he could construct his palace. It was as high as a hill and thus the mould

was called Wangching (high hill). The Sapam, Sanomcham, Sharangthem, Sanaba families were established in this reign. He also dug a river to the east of the capital and it was named Narinwa which is identified with Wangjing river in south east Imphal valley. After the construction of the capital at Wangjing he married a girl named Nongkhai-nubi. With her as the queen he performed the coronation ceremony and ascended the throne. But for many years he had no issue. Therefore, with great anxiety and concern for his posterity he worshipped God Sanamahi for a son, and 22 years after his coronation, he worshipped at Nongmaiching hill to the east of Imphal at the abode of God Nongpok Ningthou. The water he brought from this sacred place was drunk by his wife. She got conceived and gave birth to a son who was named Puthiba or Maputhiba Sopaipa had a reign of 200 years, which is not reliable.

Successors of Sopaiba

There is uncertainty about the successors of Sopaiba. According to Kangbalon, he was succeeded by Puthiba whereas Thiren Layat says that it was Khari Kharekpa. But Khagemba Yumlep gives a list of ten rulers before (Ma) Puthiba, of these ten, four rulers were already found in earlier periods. Thus six rulers remain; they are Pongthaba, Heinaopoi, Thanwoipoi, Yuhaba, Heironglel and Hongchuppa. It is doubtful whether they actually ruled or they were some clan personalities.

Puthiba: ⁴⁴ *Inventor of the Plough*

From his childhood, Puthiba was deeply interested in agricultural development. He was always in search of fertile arable lands. He himself stayed at Ahong-pung while engaging in agricultural activities. He married a girl named Kharoni and ascended the throne by performing the coronation ceremony. He had two daughters. Shoubon Leima and Sana Khongnang Leima. He asked his two daughters to engage themselves in cutting trees in preparation of cultivation fields. He is said to have invented the plough and the yoke. And the soil was ploughed out. The beak of a bird, called Wainu, king stork was used as a plough. Then, there was plentiful production of paddy. Puthiba had his capital at Khurai-Ahonge in north east Imphal, where he had developed his agricultural technology. In his old age, he had a son and he was named Lamyai Ngamba. He died after a reign of 100 years.

According to Kangbalon, Puthiba was succeeded by Lamyai Ngamba whose marriage to a girl named Kuthap Leima was referred to a tradition.⁴⁵ Khagemba Yumlep refers to eleven rulers between Puthiba and Kuptreng and Sentreng whose history will be discussed. These rulers are Tubu Thiba, Loklen Khamellakpa, Khing Ngamba, Sana Manik Khamba, Toukai, Ngamba, Tentha Heiba, Tingkoi Ngamba, Yairaba, Leikangba, Chinglai-Ngamba, Takup Tarangaa and Tangja Langwon Pakhangba who was believed to be an incarnate of god Pakhangba. He was the father of Kuptreng and Sentreng.

Kuptreng and Sentreng

Many myths and traditions exist around Kuptreng and Sentreng. In a myth, Kuptreng and Sentreng were divine personalities who were sons of the Supreme God Atiya Sidaba and known as Ashiba and Konjin Tuthokpa or Sanamahi and Pakhangba.⁴⁶ But the two persons under discussion were historical personalities. The geneologies of Angom, Ningthouja and other clans mention Kuptreng and Sentreng as their ancestors,⁴⁷ so also Leithak Leikharon. The exploits and reign of Kuptreng and Sentreng are found in the popular tradition of Sandrembi-Chaisra.⁴⁸

Tangja Langwon Pakhangba was a ruler of Kangla. And he was the father of Kuptreng and Sentreng. Both the brothers were intelligent and brilliant from their childhood. When they grew up, their father wished that though Kuptreng was elder, Sentreng, the younger would be the king; and that Kuptreng should help him. Sentreng was also known as Ningthou Apanba. After the death of their father, Kuptreng in fulfilling the wish of his deceased father supported his brother Sentreng in the administration of the kingdom. Sentreng went out in military expedition and did not return to the capital. In the absence of his younger brother Kuptreng administered the country. When Sentreng did not return for many years, Kuptreng sent out search parties but it was all in vain. At this long absence of his brother, Kuptreng was hard pressed to ascend the throne. He refused and waited anxiously for the return of his beloved brother. Kuptreng had married Puringlensu and gave birth to Pureilomba who later on founded the Angom clan.

Pressure on Kuptreng was mounting to assume the reigns of monarchy of the country. With great reluctance he was persuaded to perform the coronation ceremony. And all the preparations were ready and then suddenly Sentreng appeared at the palace on the proposed

coronation day. He was very angry over the ceremony to install his elder brother on the throne which was already his. Kuptreng pacified his younger brother by offering him the coronation costumes instead. Sentreng was installed on throne by Kuptreng. Sentreng declared that in future also, during the coronation ceremony, the chief of the clan of Kuptreng will install the future kings on the throne. This practice was followed and continued throughout the historical times. Kuptreng helped his brother Sentreng to administer the country with the help of the clan chieftains and nobles. Sentreng married Sannalembi or Sandrembi and her step sister Chaisra. The trials and tribulation through which Sannalembi went through due to the villiany and machination of her stepmother and step sister form the subject of popular folk tradition in Manipur.

Sentreng was succeeded by his son Menchisna Leinung Lhomba, and then by Cheklei Louikaiba, Thareisuba, Cheklei Yaimaba and Sana Nganjingsu. Then, there was the big flood in Manipur valley and the interregnum came. There was political vacuum in Manipur valley till the emergence of Nongada Lairen Pakhangba.

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6. A.B. Sharma, *Pakhangba*, 1952, Imphal, p. 243. There is a tradition among the Angom Clan that in their long way of migration, their ancestors once stayed at Khangkhui caves.
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15. O.K. Singh, *Archaeology in Manipur*, p.13
16. *Ibid.*
17. These traditions are recorded in *Leithak Leikharon*, *Padil*, *Sha kok Lamlen*, *Thiren Layat*, *Pakhangba Phambal* and such other works. Almost every work of this nature gives a brief cosmogonical account of the Meiteis.
18. These are different names of the Supreme God. Later on, the Sanskrit word, *Guru* (or *Kuru*) meaning master was added, hence *Atingkok Kuru* (*Guru*) *Sidaba*, *Atiya Kuru* (*guru*) *Sidaba*. At the philosophical level, they are regarded as one and same.
19. *Yengkhom Bhagya*, *Leithak Leikharon*, Imphal, 1967.
20. *Ibid*, p. 8.
21. It is perhaps the influence of Hinduism or it may be regarded as a similarity with *Vishnu's Viswarupa* concept.
22. *Leithak Leikharon*, p. 55.
23. *Atombapu Sharma*, *Pakhangba*, Imphal, 1952.
24. *Leithak Leikharon*, p. 53.
25. According to *Leithak Leikharon*, these gods participated in the competition. It may be noted that *Ashiba* and *Konjin Tuthokpa* were also known as *Sanamahi* and *Pakhangba*. For sociological interpretation of the myth, please see *Ch. Budhi Singh*, *Kangla Phamban Wanthok*, a Meitei Myth on Succession in, *T.C. Sharma D.N. Majumdar* (ed.) *The Eastern Himalayas*, 1982, Calcutta.
26. *Leithak Leikharon*, p. 58.
27. *Wakoklol Thilel Amailol Pukok* is a controversial work which is claimed to have been compiled in 1588 A.D. during the reign of *Mungyamba*, a king of Manipur. It refers to *Mangang Ningthou*, the chief of the *Mangang* clan who is believed to have lived an incredible 700 years. He is regarded as the first chief. He taught king *Ngasapa* the art of writing on 1669 B.C. based on the references in the text that it was compiled in 3248 years of king *Ngasapa* (3247-1588=1668 B.C.) See *Ng. Kangjia*, *History of Kanglei Eeyek*, 1878, Imphal pp. 6-23. Both these figures are legendary though attempts are made to make them historical figures.
28. *Y. Bheigya* *Leithak Leikharon*, Imphal, p. 76; *N. Angou Lawang* (ed.) *Kangbalon*, 1976, Imphal, p. 1; *Thiren Layat* (ed.) by *N. Ibchouba*, 1981, Imphal, p. 4; *Shakok Lamlen*.
29. *Kangbalon* and *Shakok Lamlen* give identical information about King *Kangba's* reign.
30. Reference to this father *Tangja Lila Pakhangba* and a girl of *Chenglei* clan might have been later interpolations. There were several *Kangbas*. His birth at *Koubra* confirms the tradition that the Meiteis settled first at *Koubra*. But the history of *Kangbalon* was probably written by the supporters of *Pakhangba* dynasty and the followers of the *Pakhangba-Sanamahi* cult; hence the importance being accorded to *Sanamahi* and *Pakhangba*.
31. *Thiren Layat*, pp. 4-5.
32. *Leithak Leikharon*, p. 74.
33. *Kangbalon* and *Wakoklol* represent him as the son of *Kangba Kangkhan*.
34. *Kangbalon*, p. 5.
35. *Wakoklol Thiren Amaiba Pural*, Imphal, 1975 in *Ng. Kangjia*, *History of Kanglei Eeyek*, p.7-8.

36. There are references to kingdom or a ruling clan called Moriya of Burmese chronicles and Mreura of Ptolemy's Geography which are discussed in the previous chapter, which flourished in Kabaw Valley of Upper Burma. Moriyas were the descendents of the Mauryas of eastern India who founded the ruling dynasties in Burma. Mruera was a metropolis. Moriya, Mruera and Maria or Maliya have some phonetic similarity. The settlement of the Chakpas who were related to the Shans of Kabaw valley and colonisation of a son of Maliya Phambalcha called Pong among the Pongs and Mau Shans of upper Burma point to this connection of Moliya / Moriya Phambalcha which the Shans of Kabaw Valley and beyond. See W. Ibohal Singh, *A History of Manipur*, 1985, reproduced in the chapter on regional principalities.
37. *Thiren Layat*, *Ibid*.
38. T.C. Hodson *The Meities* p. 111 gives a shortened account of Numit Kappa. on Appendix II of the same work, a translation of Numitkappa into modern Manipur and English is provided, O. Bhogeswar Singh, *Numit Kappa*, Imphal, 1982, O.Bhogeswar Singh *Ningthourol Seireng*, Imphal, 1967.
39. O. Bhogeswar Singh, *Ningthourol Sheireng*, 1968.
40. T.C. Hodson, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
41. O.B. Singh, *Ningthourol Sheireng*, pp.121.
42. They are all now deities who were ancestor chiefs of the respective regions of the land. "Ningthou Pongba Tara" later on was applied to those nobles or ministers of the king. However, N. Khelchandra, *Ariba Manipuri Sahitya Ithas*, p. 36. (footnote) says that the Ningthou pongba Tara means ten nobles namely Pukhramba, Nongthonba, Khwairakpa, Yiskullakpa, Hiyangba, Hanjaba, Chongkhomba, Hanjaba, Senanglung Hanjaba, Ithingla Hanjaba, Phanthekcha, Naikhumchaba.
43. *Ningthourol Seireng*, p.122.
44. *Kangbalon*, p.12-13, *Ningthourol Sheireng*, pp. 96-102.
45. *Ningthourol Seireng*-pp. 123-24. He is represented here as ruler of Konna Chak, but not as a successor of Puthiba.
46. Atombapu Sharma, *Pakhangba*.
47. The clan geneologies maintained in Manipur royal court reproduced in *Pakhangba*; Khumallamba Yaima, *Salai Meihourol Pukok*, *Leithak Laitharol*.
48. This tradition is found in N. Manijao, *Sandrembi Chaisra*, Imphal, 1978.

4

Pakhangba and Foundation of Ningthouja Dynasty

Clans and Clan Principalities

Clan among the Meiteis was both a social and political institution. The duality in the nature and function of the clan necessitates an examination of the growth of clans and clan principalities. The Meitei society is a kinship and lineage based society. The clan or lineage is known as Salai which literally means the ancestor-god of the lineage (Sa = Sagei = lineage and Lai = god-ancestor). In the legendary period, the literary texts refer to the absence of the Salai. And in the historical time, the Meiteis are found to have been divided into seven clans the credit of which was given to King Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. These seven clans or lineages were the Ningthouja (Mangang), Luwang, Angom, Khuman, Moirang, Kha-Nganba (Khaba and Naganba) and Sarang-Leisangthem (Chenglei). Myths were created to explain the origin of the seven clans. There were two popular myths perhaps created in the 17th and 18th centuries. One myth attributes to the distribution of the limbs of body of Guru, primeaval father, in the form of a cattle. This myth was associated with the legend of Sanamahi and Pakhangba, the two sons of the primeaval father, who were being tested to understand Him¹. Another myth was that the seven clans were created out of the seven days of the week. These myths were invented to mystify the origin of the clans. However, historical evidence clearly indicates the existence of various ethnic groups and lineages in the valley of Manipur, viz., the Angom, Luwang, Mangang, (Ningthouja), Khaba, Naganba, Sarangthem, Leisangthem, Chenglei, Haorok Konthou,

Manting-Mara, Lela Khongnang, Lokkha-Haokha, Chakpas, Khem, Heirem Khunjan, Moirang, Thanga-Kambong, Urok Usai, Lokkha-Lokkhu.² These ethnoses belonging to the Tibeto-Burman, Tai and other Mongoloid groups were first brought gradually under the political suzerainty of leading clans with their principalities and grouped into seven clans. Thus we find the creation of the seven clans out of the various ethnic groups who were at different stages of social, cultural and political development.

Geographical distribution of clans

The establishment of kingdom of Kangla under Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was an event of great historical importance specially in the evolution of the Meitei Kingdom of Manipur. The emergence of the kingdom was an outcome of the struggle between various ethnic groups and clan chiefdoms in the valley. Though the chronology of these events cannot be easily established, by the time of Pakhangba's emergence as the ruler of Kangla, the historicity of the clan principalities is well established. Since Manipur was one of the migration and trade routes between South Asia and South East Asia, the existence of small tribes and sub-tribes speaking similar or different languages and dialects is beyond doubt. W. Ibohal Singh in a recent work, has referred to a large number of ethnic and linguistic groups which are too confusing.³ R.K. Jhalajit Singh has referred to the existence of clan heptarchy during the reign of Pakhangba,⁴ A *salai* of the Meiteis was originally an ethnic group or tribe speaking a distinct language or dialect occupying a territory, having an autonomous principality under a ruler who was both a political chieftain and social head of the clan. It was probable that there were many village-chiefdoms of various groups and clan or lineage principalities. However, there appears to be five clan principalities, over and above the village chiefdoms, like the principality of the Angom, the Luwang, the Khuman, the Moirang and Kangla kingdom whose throne was a bond of contention between the Mangang, the Khabas and according to some scholars Sarang-Leishangthem and Chengleis. At one stage, it is believed that the Sarang Leishangthem, the Mangang and the Khabas ruled at Kangla, the capital of the future Ningthouja kingdom. Whoever occupied the Kangla exercised the political supremacy over

other smaller principalities. The geneologies and chronicles of the clans and lineages give the historical account of the clan principalities.

Manipur valley in the historical time, had a lineage based social system and lineage based political units which ultimately emerged as the principalities. The principalities of the salai or clan or lineages had delineated territories. The names of the clan and the territory were identical in most cases. The clan spoke a similar language. The chief of the clan who was originally a chieftain of a village or groups of villages was the protector of the clan and he became the chief of the principality who was called Ningthou (literal meaning : king). The land was perhaps owned by the clan in the name of the clan. The chief had to protect the territory of the clan, the agricultural land and forest for cultivation, grazing, fishing and hunting. The development of settled agriculture transformed the concept of clan territory as the chief established his rights over the lands which were individually possessed with the communal rights over the use of land being retained. The chief was given the responsibility of performing rituals for the clan and the principality. And the chief's control over the land and people was legitimised by the creation of myth associating or adducing divinity status to the chief : this happened among the Ningthouja and Moirang rulers. He also assumed the religious and ritual role to become the high-priest of the community and the principality. The chief of the principality was originally the social head and he retained it even after he was the political head of the principality. Therefore, the chief combined in himself the role of the Ningthou (king) and Piba (social head) and priest. Support to the principality came in the form of tribute either in kind or services which were an archaic form of feudal service from the population and lesser clans or ethnic groups at the village levels which came under their control. Moreover, as the Piba (social head) of his clan, the chief got support from the heads of the sub-lineages (sageis) and the households. What Romila Thapar writes is relevant to the process of the formation of clan principalities and autonomous states in Manipur. She writes, "A state is generally associated with political authority which functions within a territorial unit, delegates its power to functionaries, is financed by revenues collected from those who contribute on an impersonal basis to its maintenance and acts as an instrument of integrating social segments identified not merely by ritual roles but also by economic function."⁵ This was exactly the task carried out by the Meitei Kingdom under the Ningthoujaa dynasty in the evolution of the Meitei state.

Clan Territories: Luwang Principality

The Luwang geneological chronicles record the habitat of the Luwang clan. According to Mahou Naophamlol, "the Luwangs settled at Kekrupan, then in Langkon hills". According to Langtai Khuya, the Luwang territory was from "Liklaleima Chengjin to Hou-Thangwai". Hou Thangwai covers "Lamdeng, Kameng, Mayanglangjing, Terak, Urak, Chirang, Luwangsangban, Khonghampat, Chengin, Sekmai, Khoiri village and Lamphel of West Imphal.⁶ The main river is the Luwangli which flows from Tamphailing of Kameng to Lamdeng and into the Irong stream of Iroisemba. They were believed to have established their capital at the foothills of the Koubru mountain and later on at Funan hills, Loiing and Lammangdong.

Khuman Territory

It appears that the Luwang and the Khuman were living together in a large compact territory. But after separation from the Luwangs, the Khuman occupied a large tract of land in central and south east Imphal valley. It included Hou Langloi Lammahanbi covering Hiyangthang, Langthabal, Heiyen, Keirak, Wabagai, Meijarao, Mayang, Imphal, Wangoi, Pumlen, Yairipok, Sikhong, Thoubal Tamding Tentha, Wangjing and Tentha, Once it included Lammangdong Phoiing, Khorian chinggon, Ningombam, and Namkunjin.⁷ Their capital was originally at Thoubal which was later on shifted to Meikoipung near Mayang Imphal. Their territory was bounded in the west by the great Loktak lake and Moirang territory, in the east by Heirok hills and in the south by Chairen, Lokkha-Haokha and in the north by the Kangla kingdom.

The Angom Country

The Angom according to tradition originally migrated from Khangkhui caves in Ukhrul. They were divided into three groups : Tari's group, Puleiromba's group and Khoidon-Mandop's group. Tari was a Sarang Leisangthem, Puleiromba was the progenitor of the Angom clan. The Angom first settled at Nongmaiing hills where there is a place called Angom Yumphan, the homestead of the Angoms.⁸ Their territory covered Kasom Yangphu in the east, Telou channa and Lamlai in the north, Phaknung and Angom Leikai in the west, Yairipok in the south.

Later on the Angom chiefs were given residence by the Meitei kings to north of Kangla, but driven out to Kontha in north east Imphal and then to Puleiromba east of Sanjenthong in the east bank of the Imphal river or Turel Achouba. The Angoms sponsored Pakhangba to be the ruler of the Kangla kingdom.

The Khaba Land

The Khabas were once a powerful group having occupied and ruled over Kangla before the ascendancy of Pakhangba. They had a long contact with the Mangangs who also occupied Kangla at some point of history. The Khabas had a series of fight with Pakhangba and ultimately defeated them. The territory of Kangla which was ruled by the Khabas was bound by the Langol Hills in the west, Konghampat in the north, Nongmaiching in the east and Lamdaibung in the south.⁹ After the defeat of the Khabas by Pakhangba, they were reduced to a mere social group and merged with the Nganbas. They were known as Kha-Nganba clan.

The Mangang

The Mangangs were among the earliest ethnic groups. They also ruled at Kangla and its surroundings within the present Imphal area. The Mangang territory formed the core of the Ningthouja Kingdom of the later period.

Moirang Principality

Moirang principality in south west Manipur near the Loktak lake had a long history. It was the homeland of the Moirang clan. Their territory was also known as Ngangoi and Kege-Moirang.¹⁰ It has been conjectured that some village chiefdoms were established by different groups within the Moirang country, who came from the west and the east. Moirang was favoured by ecological advantages. The surrounding hills in the west and south with formidable forest, the Loktak lake with its varied flora and fauna, specially fish and easy means of transports backed up by good agriculture, provided resources to Moirang to build up and sustain an independent principality for several centuries. The Moirang territory was bounded in the east by Loktak lake and the Khuman territory, Ningthoukhong, Lammangdong

in the south, Thangjing hills and Leimatak basin in the west, Manipur river or Turel Achouba in the south east. The territory covered Thanga islets, Lokkha-Haokha near Sugnu.

Heiren Khunjam

Heiren Khunjams were a scattered group with village level autonomous political organisations. They were not able to build up any compact territorial principality. But historical evidences indicate their existence and struggle against the Meitei kings several centuries after Pakhangba. Originally, they had their habitat to the south of Kakching and east of Moirang territory. They had their own distinct dialect and distinct culture. Later on they were absorbed into different Salais of the Meiteis.

Sarang-Leisangthem (Chengleis)

The Cheigleis, Sarangthem and Leisangthem appeared to be very old ethnic groups. Due to vicissitudes in their political fortune, the Chengleis were divided into Sarangthem and Leisangthem who were combined under one Salai known as Sarang-Leisangthem. According to Moirangthem Narendro, their earliest chiefs also ruled from Kangla; the names of rulers who are listed in seventeenth century text, Thiren Layat belong to the Sarang Leisangthem.¹¹ Other tribes like, Thanga Kambong was living in the Luwang country, Lokkha both a tribe and place name, in south west Imphal valley within Moirang principality, Haorck-Konthou in Luwang country, Mori and Kege in Moirang territory.

Political Vacuum in the Valley of Manipur

With these tribes and clans occupying the political units in various levels of social and political organisation, there was no central or a more capable state which would have established its sway over the people in Manipur valley in historical times. Despite political autonomy, the clans had social and cultural contacts between themselves. The lack of strong state created a political vacuum in Kangla principality. Several ancient texts, specially, Shanglen Puba puya¹² refers to the devastation of Manipur valley by a flood due to the landslide caused by the change of the course of the Leimatak river. The population fled to hills and for many years there was no government. After the draining away of the inundating water, the

people gradually came down to the valley, but there was no organised state in Kangla. There was political vacuum and anarchy. There was constant fear in the minds of the people that a country without a king was not worth living.¹³ During this period of political anarchy there was struggle between different ethnic groups and tribes who sponsored rival candidates both from the inside and outside the land to the throne of Kangla. And Nongda Lairen Pakhangba emerged successful and ascended the throne of Kangla.

ADVENT OF NONGDA LAIREN PAKHANGBA

Origin

Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was a prince of mysterious origin; opinions regarding his origin and parentage range from being an Aryan prince from upper Burma¹⁴ to an adventurer from the Brahmaputra valley or the Himalayas¹⁵ to divine incarnate to put an end to anarchy in the land¹⁶ or an illegitimate child of a clan chief, made a ruler by his foster father.¹⁷ There are many references in many literary texts including genealogies to persons both mythical and historical having the title of Pakhangba (one who knows his father). There are four Pakhangbas viz., Loimanai Pakhangba, Leinung Lonja (Ariba) Pakhangba, Lolang Pakhangba and Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. According to Pakhangba Phambal, a literary text¹⁸ edited and published by Kh.Yaima Singh, which deals with the coronation of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba refers to the three other Pakhangbas as divine personalities who became rulers. They were definitely mythical figures but Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was a historical king as proved by Cheitharol Kumbaba, the royal chronicle and many historical texts. Later works which were written by scholars who tried to adduce divine origin to the office of the king and the dynasty founded by Nongda Liren Pakhangba claim that Nongda Lairen himself was the incarnate of the divine Pakhangba of the Meitei pantheon who was crowned king by his supreme father, Atiya Sidaba with the machination of the divine mother Leimarel thereby denying the throne to his more capable brother Sanamahi.¹⁹ The divine Pakhangba was also known as Konjin Tuthokpa and his brother Sanamahi also known as Ashiba are worshipped as the two most important gods of the Meitei pantheon. The divine Pakhangba is the deity of the royal dynasty founded by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. His regnal name was given to him by the poets and singers during his coronation.²⁰ His other titles were Laiyingthou Apanba, Nongpok Poklen, Leinung Lonja Pakhangba, Ningthem Sana, Leinung Lonja Ariba.^{20A}

The historicity of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba is clearly proved by the historical chronicles and his dynasty's geneology. But the identification of his parents has been quite a controversial problem. The texts give different versions with regard to his parentage. According to Khagemba Yangbi²¹ Pakhangba's mother was Leinung Yaibirok, who was described as one born three times a queen and married to three kings. Chada Laihui, the geneology of the queens of Ningthouja dynasty²² mentions Leinung Yaibirok as the mother of Pakhangba; Pakhangba Nongkarol a text dealing with the death of the rulers of Manipur²³ collaborates with the geneology of the Ningthouja clan kept in the royal court of Manipur²⁴ and describes Nongda Lairen Pakhangba being born of Leinung Yaibirok. Another text,²⁵ Leishemlon Shakok says that Yaibirok was the mother of Pakhangba. However, Sanglen Puba Puya²⁶ gives an interesting account of Leinung Yaibirok worshipping sun god for a child who would become a ruler of the realm, and she was granted a divine cloud egg by the sun god, and it was brought to her by Puleiromba, a chief of the Angom clan. A child was hatched out of the divine egg. Yaibirok was also described as the mother-in-law of queen Laisana, who was the wife of Pakhangba.²⁷

However, Leithak Leikharol, a work of 18th century which is a compendium of myths and legends of Meitei cosmogony and some clan geneologies gives a different version according to which Leinung Yabi Yakha Chanu was the mother of Pakhangba. It is of interest that the name of this woman is mentioned in Khagemba Yangbi along with other women who were connected with Pakhangba's birth. Khagemba Yumbi²⁸ says, "Piritnu, Areinu, Ahumnu, Nongda Nongkhal Lembi, daughter ancestors Yakha having been blessed with many distinguished ancestors and ancestresses and having become Yumjao Leima, thrice born as queen and married to three chiefs. Leinung Yaibirok gave birth to Pakhangba." According to the two authors the names of queens mentioned here are of different persons and not the surnames and aliases of Leinung Yaibirok. According to them quoting Leithak Leikharon, Piritnu was the mother of Kuptreng and Sentreng in a traditional period called Hayi Chak. Areinu was the mother of Tuma Nganba and wife of Leikhomtao. Ahumnu was the mother of Leishatao and wife of Konthou. Leikak Leiyarel chanu was the wife of Konchin Tuthokpa and mother of Leishanglen and Leinung Yaibi Yakha chanu according to Leithak Leikharon²⁹ was the wife of Sentreng and mother of Ningthem Pakhangba. According to them

Yaibirok was a foster mother. Meitei Puwari ³⁰ says that Leikak Leiyarel chanu had an union with the sun God and gave birth to Pakhangba and Yaibirok was a nursing mother (Naoroibi).

Y.M. Singh and N.B. Singh have opined on the basis of Meihourol Lathup Latam that the mother of Pakhangba was Liklabicha Nongtangnu who was illegitimately touched by Luwang Langmaiba and she was forcibly married to Puleiromba. ³¹ This opinion is not convincing as Liklabicha was, according to chronicle of the Luwang clan (Luwanglon), the daughter of Luwang chief, Luwang Punsiba. She had a secret affair with Puleiromba of the Angom clan. He was caught by her father. He was left scot free when he told the Luwang chief that he would have a long life if he approached the Mangong Guru. A son was born to Liklabicha; he was named Khoidom. According to a tradition Liklabicha had another son named Mandom created by the spiritual power of her father,³² Liklabicha brought up the two sons who were told that their father was Puleiromba. They met their father who refused to take them to his abode. Therefore, Liklabicha, mother of Koidom and Mandom could not be the mother of Nongda Lairen who was as alleged, fathered by Luwang Langmaiba, but forced on Puleiromba as his son. Khoidom became Luwang, and Mandom became Angom. It can be interpreted that Liklabicha Nongtangnu was married to a Luwang designated Luwang Langmaiba and she was also married later on to Puleiromba. Khoidom was born out of the first marriage and the Mandom was born of her marriage to Puleiromba who did not accept her socially. Wahengbam Ibohal Singh³³ also supports the view that Yaibirok was the mother of Pakhangba. While Yabirok, from all accounts, is accepted as mother of Pakhangba, we do not have much knowledge about her background. As stated above, various texts³⁴ describe Yabirok as "Leinung girl, Yakha girl, a Chakha with numerous ancestors and ancestresses, a Yumjao Leima (a royal housewife) three times queen, married to three chiefs successively, Leinung Yabirok begets Nongta Lairen Pakhangba". The Manipuri text runs thus "Leinung Yabi Yakha chanu, Chakkha nurol pirol yambi, Yumjao Leima Oibi. Leima Ahumlak sai-onbi, Ningthou ahumlak onna leima oibi, Leinung Yabirok na Nongta Lairen Pakhangbane."³⁵ Ningthourol Lambuba describes Yabirok as "Grand madam Meitei queen Leinung Chakkha Yabirok of numerous ancestors and ancestresses, handsome and beautiful, the cream of the Leihou and Leinung, three times queen and married to the three chiefs successively."³⁶ However, W. Ibohal Singh's description of Yabirok as

a polyandrous woman is evidently erroneous³⁷ perhaps due to a mistake in transliteration of the Meitei phrase "Nurol Pirol Yamba" (one who has numerous ancestors and ancestresses). The Meities were never a polyandrous people though there was polygamy among them. The society is patriarchal; however, the importance given to the female ancestor or the mother is suspected to be a relic of a matrilineal system as prevalent among some Austro-Asiatic people like the Khasi. But the chronicles and other literary texts clearly show that Yabirok was the mother of Pakhangba.

Father of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was projected in the geneology of the Ningthouja clan to be Sentreng. An attempt has been made by Singh and Singh that Sentreng was one of the aliases of the father of Pakhangba and the real father was Luwang Langmeiba of the Luwang clan and the social father was Puleiromba, the chief of the Angom clan. These two personalities were associated with the capture of the Kangla by Pakhangba. But as stated above, it is doubtful. W. Ibohal Singh opines that Pakhangba's father was Likleng who was holding the post of Tupu. Likleng was a Luwang officer also known as Luwang Langmaiba, perhaps a designation rather than a name³⁸. The original name of Pakhangba according to W.I. Singh based on Leimaren Naoyom and Leithak Leikharol, was Nongta Tukuplik. According to Leithak Leikharol, "Taoroinai went up to the sky in the guise of a Tupu (meaning officer-in-charge or guide) and got the divine cloud egg (Nonglum) which would become Pakhangba from Atiya Sidaba. The name of Taoroinai when he was under the guise of a Tupu was Likleng. Tupu gave the cloud egg to Yabirok, three times queen and married successively to three chiefs and the name was Nongta Tukuplik".³⁹ The same text says that after his birth Pakhangba was also called Layon Lang Tanouba. When he was hiding, he was called Leikhamba Mihisang Heining. Though some mythical elements are added in the legendary account, we are pretty sure that Nongda Tukuplik or Layon Lang Tanouba or Leikhamba was born of Yabirok and his father was a Tupu⁴⁰ named Likleng. Pakhangba was thus the son of Likleng a noble of the Luwang clan who was a Tupu and later on a Langmaiba. Because of the comparatively low origin as he was not a royal prince, his ancestry was suppressed and put in a mysterious way by him or by his successors.

Birth

Existing literatures associate the birth of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba with divinity. These were perhaps later writings to deify Nongda

Lairen Pakhangba. He was projected as the incarnate of the divine Pakhangba. Pakhangba Phambal which deals with coronation of the kings with the title of Pakhangba refers to earlier Pakhangbas who were also projected as incarnates of the divine Pakhangba. However, Shanglen Puba Puya,⁴¹ records that the country was in anarchy and a lady named Yabirok worshipped the sun god for a child to become the king of Kangla. The boon was granted and a divine egg was given her through Puleiromba who brought it in his mouth. The egg was hatched and Pakhangba was born at a village named Hanaching⁴² Piritnu was associated with birth of Pakhangba as a nursing mother. Pakhangba was kept in hiding in fear of people who aspired for the kingship. When he grew up, the people had started returning to the valley after taking shelter at Tangbo⁴³. It was most probable that his mother Yabirok sought and got the help of the contemporary chiefs of the clans of the Angom and Luwang in the preparation for struggle to capture the throne at Kangla. It has been conjectured that Yabirok must have married three chiefs at different times to get the political support for her son⁴⁴. Pakhangba Phambal and Ningthourol Lambuba refer to a sister of Pakhangba named Sira Kongtingnu born of Yabirok. Another sister named Ngangoi Numting married to the Angom is referred to Leikhul Likhol. We do not come across any brother of Pakhangba. Sira Kangtungnu was well known for skill in dressing and cooking.

Colonisation of Poireiton

According to some literary accounts like Pakhangba Phambal and Pakhangba Nongkarol, Leithak Leikharon, Meitei Puwari, one of the contemporaries of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba who claimed the throne of Kangla was Poireiton, a prince of Khamnung Sawa which has been identified with Kangla in eastern Tibet and trijunction of Tibet, Burma and India.⁴⁵ A Manipuri text which deals with the adventures of Poireiton in his colonising mission is the celebrated Poireiton Khunthok (Migration of Poireiton).⁴⁶ It will be worthwhile to describe the adventures of Poireiton in this context.

A man who was described or disguised as a mole visited the Khamnung country, the land of dead and requested Thongaren the king to come to the human world (Manipur valley). Thongaren, because of his old age could not go; so he asked his younger brother Chingkhong Poireiton to go out for the colonisation. The man further informed Thongaren of the various flora and fauna, the rulers of country which included Kongkhangpha, Laikhutsa, Laikhutsang, Mariya Phambalba, Leima Tanu and King Kangba.

Poireiton was a widower with six children by his deceased wife. He told Thongaren that it would not be proper to go in the colonisation mission without a wife. Thongaren then requested his first queen Laikhurembi to accompany Poireiton. Laikhurembi declined as she was old and her association with the king was deeply rooted in Khamnung Sawa. The King then asked his second wife Leima Leinaotabi to join the mission. Leinaotabi readily agreed and made the necessary preparation for the journey. She collected different varieties of paddy including the scented rice chahau, agricultural implements, domesticated animals, earthenwares, gongs and paddy husk to keep fire. Poireiton brought one iron rod for a walking stick. His horde consisted of men, women and children; there were artisans, medicine men and priests. It was a complete team equipped for a long journey.

They found that the passage to the land of the living was blocked by a big boulder which was removed by a horned bull. The team crossed the passage; but a couple Chakriba and his wife Tangribi went back to collect their articles which were left behind. When they crossed back across the passage, the big boulder fell down and the wife was shut in behind. Her husband heard the cries of his wife but he could not save. This was the first tragic accident of the journey of Poireiton. Then an advance party of two persons was killed by a tiger. However, the hornets carried by Leinaotabi in a cage were set free to attack the tiger which fled away. Several places were named after Poireiton. He travelled mostly in Kabaw valley and came across the Shans, Chakpas, Anals, Moyons, Tangkhuls, Kabuis, Marings, Thongnangs, Poireis etc. In Kabaw valley while passing through the Shan villages, Poireiton was offered wine and other eatables. His hordes saw the burning of the dead body of a Chakpa boy who died of fainting. His people were frightened of the devil fire which devoured the dead and fled.

One of the objectives of Poireiton was the search for immortality. His horde brought one hundred and eight items of foods which could be eaten raw and another one hundred and eight items of food which could be eaten after cooking. But his journey took a long time. But it was irony of fate that many of his followers including his six children, four boys and two girls died. His sons were Chakkha Konghauba, Kangdol Leinouba, Sagang Yaominaba, Leishang Khakwaiba, the daughters were Huiyon Konthingnu and Haochong Langmainu. After the death of his six children he rebuked his wife Leinaotabi for having forgotten to bring the herbal medicines from Chakkha hills and Mori hills. His daughter Huiyon Konthingnu was buried with a bell metal gong. After

going round the surrounding hills he visited eighty five villages of Shan, Tangkhul, Maring, Anal, and Poirei (Meiteis).^{46A} They came to Lamdeng in west Imphal. Poireiton and his hordes were completely worn out when they arrived at Lamdeng. But they could not get the fruits of immortality. He admitted that there was no immortality among men. His son Tabung Singminaba by his second wife also died but revived just before the burial (according to the dream account he was sent back by his uncle Thongaren, the king of the dead). The original homeland of Poireiton was identified by W. Yumjao Singh⁴⁷ with Sylhet in eastern Bengal and Poireiton was regarded as the leader of the band of Aryan colonisers to Manipur valley. Some scholars had pointed out the name Poireiton was a corruption from the Sanskrit name Prayatana or Purohita⁴⁸ so he came to Manipur valley through one of the routes across the western hills and settled at Lamdeng among the Luwangs.

On the other hand W.I. Singh has identified as stated earlier the Khamnung country with Kangla in eastern Tibet. Poireiton's route of migration was conjectured by him in the following route : From Sawa Kangla to Sangang-Minzong to Mali river, then crossed the Chakkhan pass and arrived at Loklai river, then to Ningthi (Chindwin) river to Somra tract then to Poi village to Leelwaiyu then to Sangolmang in northern Imphal valley then to Kanglatongbi.⁴⁹ This conjecture is not based on any historical evidence but on possible route of migration.

The main cause of the migration according to him was political harassment from more powerful neighbours, disease and death. But a textual examination shows that Poireiton travelled a lot among the Shans in the Kabaw valley and among the tribes of present Tengnoupal hills before he entered into Manipur valley. Therefore, the entry point to Manipur would not be through Iril river but through the routes across the Tengnoupal hills and Manipur river. It has been suggested that Poireiton was a contemporary of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba but W.I. Singh thinks that Poireiton was 10 generations older than Pakhangba and he fixed the date of Poireiton's colonisation in 810 A.D. He also opines that Poireiton founded a principality at Kanglatongbi and his descendants came to be known as Poirei, a name of the Meiteis. According to his theory, Poireiton was the founder of the first political kingdom. He also suggested that ethnic group of Poireiton was Chakkha tribe and a descendant of Abhiraja of classical Sakya ruling house of Moriya in Kabaw valley.

Poireiton Khunthok does not contain anything on the hypothesis given above. It is not mentioned anywhere that Poireiton founded the

Poirei kingdom. The text says that he met Poirei Meiteis in many villages in the foothills and ultimately at Lamdeng. It will be far fetched conclusion that Poireiton was projected as the civilizer of Imphal valley. Already principalities and kingdoms had existed in Manipur valley before the coming of Poireiton. The "mole" informed Thongaren of rulers like king Kangba and Moriya Phambalcha who ruled in Manipur valley in early times. The older historical text like Pakhangba Nongkarol indicates that he was a contemporary of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. It is clear that Poireiton's mission as portrayed in Poireiton Khunthok was a complete failure. We will examine his contemporaneity with Pakhangba in subsequent paragraphs.

Pakhangba's Struggle for the Throne

The Khabas were a powerful tribe who ruled at Kangla. The geneology of the Khaba and Nganba (Kha-Nganba) clan traced their descent from the Supreme god but human personalities could be counted from Tourel Khaba— Tourel Khuba — Tourel Kha, Tourington, Tarang, Khaba. There is a tradition in Panthoibi Khongun according to which the Chenglei chief Sopaiba sought the hand of Mangang princess Panthoibi who refused the proposal. And ultimately she was married to a Khaba chief called Khaba Tarang Khoinucha. Panthoibi had a romantic affair with Kairon Chingsomba or Nongpok Ningthou of the Selloi Langmai. The Khaba chased the two lovers. Ultimately the two were united and Khaba chief realising that the two were divine personalities, he started worshipping them. In the period before the emergence of Pakhangba, the Khabas had already declined, though they were also trying to regain the vacant throne of Kangla. The leader of the Khaba tribe was Khaba Nongchengba who challenged the claim of Pakhangba. Another leader who played the most important role in the political fortune of Pakhangba was Puleiromba, the chief of the Angom. According to their respective geneologies, the Angom clan which was founded by Pukiromba was descended from Kuptreng who was the brother of Sentreng from whom descended Pakhangba, the founder of the Ningthouja dynasty. But several legends associate Puleiromba with the birth of Pakhangba either as a foster father or a friend or husband of mother of Pakhangba namely Yabirok. We have discussed the parentage of Pakhangba, Puleiromba was requested by Yabirok to support the cause of her son in the struggle for the throne. Actually it was on the invitation of Puleiromba, the chief of Angom clan supported by Luwang, Chakpas and other tribes that Pakhangba could ascend the throne.

According to Chakpa Khunta Khunthok⁵⁰ Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, when he became of age fought against the Khabas under the leadership of Khaba Nongchenba. In this struggle, Pakhangba was defeated by the Khabas and Pakhangba was forced to take refuge in Moirang principality. According to tradition recorded in some texts, Pakhangba was in hiding at Moirang for many years. Some of his follower families namely Mungyang Chaoba and Tengkhujam established the sub-lineage of Mungyangjam and Loirengjam who, though belonging to Moirang clan, cannot intermarry with the Ningthouja clan.⁵¹ While staying in Moirang, he organised support from Moirang Chaopa Mathipa, Sapon Sanoupa who extended whole hearted help to him. The forces of Moirang for Pakhangba defeated the Khabas who were completely destroyed by him. Some Khabas surrendered to Angom Puleiromba, some fled to hills and became Tangkhul and some became Kabuis of Nungnang village in western hills. Some Khabas went south and settled among the Mahou tribe, a group went north and settled at the foothills of Koubru and became Khaba Umlen. One Khaba Nongampa surrendered to Pakhangba himself.⁵² The Khaba-Pakhangba rivalry continued throughout the reign of Pakhangba. But the defeat of the Khabas at the hand of Pakhangba had ended the political power of the Khabas who were included into Kha-Nganba clan later on.

Pakhangba's relation with Poireiton is a bit vague. As stated above, Poireiton was a prince, a younger brother of Thongaren, the ruler of Khamnung country (the land of the dead). He came for a great mission of colonization in Imphal valley. Poireiton Khunthok does not contain anything about his claiming the throne of Kangla, nor of establishing a new kingdom. But the geneologies of Luwang and Khuman clans put him as the ancestor of the two clans. Was Chingkhong Poireiton the progenitor of the Luwangs or absorbed into the Luwang clan? Likewise as the Khuman clan had some connection with Luwangs, was Poireiton portrayed as its progenitor? Or were there two Poireitons? Poireiton of the clan geneologies, and Poireiton, the coloniser? Or was Poireiton added and interpolated in the geneology of the Luwang and the Khuman? In Poireiton Khunthok, he was regarded as a religious innovator, not as a ruler.

In Pakhangba Nongkarol,⁵³ a text dealing with the death of Ningthouja kings, there is a reference that Poireiton and his hordes proceeded to Kangla. And Pakhangba heard about his march and confronted him on the way. Poireiton was defeated and his royal

costumes were confiscated. And he exclaimed that his costumes and wife were forcibly captured by this prince. Later on he realised the identity of Pakhangba. He pretended to be dead. Pakhangba made the preparation for the cremation of Poireiton. Finding himself outwitted, Poireiton pretended to be mad. But Poireiton ultimately acknowledged the supremacy of Pakhangba. It is not known whether Pakhangba fought against Poireiton before he ascended the throne of Kangla or after. Meanwhile Thongaren the elder brother of Poireiton, who stayed back repented and proceeded to Imphal valley via Manipur river and arrived at Moirang.⁵⁴ He came with his younger sister Laisra or Laisna and offered her to be the queen of Pakhangba. Perhaps Poireiton, Thongaren and Laisna were reconciled to the new situation in Manipur valley; Poireiton became a village chief (Khun-Ningthou)^{54a} of the Poireis. The contention of some scholars that Poireiton was sponsored by the Luwangs while Pakhangba was sponsored by Angoms is difficult to accept. Poireiton's sister Laisna played an important role in the social and cultural life of the court of Pakhangba. Even if Poireiton was sponsored by Luwangs, which is not substantiated by any evidence, Pakhangba married his sister and a matrimonial alliance was already effected. And the Luwangs and Angoms extended strong support to Pakhangba. Then Poireiton went out of the historical scene.

Coronation of Pakhangba

Having defeated the Khabas and Poireiton, Pakhangba was invited by Puleiromba, the Angom chief, one Luwang priest (Luwang Langmaiba) Ningthem Apanba of the Mangang and many leaders of Chakpa tribe to come to the Kangla, the ancient capital of the Meitei Kingdom⁵⁵. According to Chakparol, Kansurol, a leader of the Chakpas sent four persons namely, Chakmaringba, Langmaringba, Mungmaringba, Ngangmaringba to call Pakhangba. They guarded Pakhangba at Kangla during the coronation. Pakhangba marched to the northern part of north east Imphal valley-between Heingang hills and Nongmaijing hills along the Lilwai (Iril) river and passed by the tribal villages of Lishi, Thangwai, Mucheng, Keihon, Naokal, Haomu, Tangkhul whose villagers followed him and arrived at Kangla. The three chiefs arranged for the servants and attendants, arms and weapons, the officials like Pukhran, Nongthon, Amai (Priest) poets and singers, torch bearers, swordsmen, umbrella or parasol bearers, gold and silver, precious stones, clothes and foods. At Kangla, the three Sorarens

meaning Puleiromba, Luwang Langamba and Ningthou Apanba presented all the arms and weapons and coronation costumes to Pakhangba. All the people were invited to the ceremony and Pakhangba and his queen Laisna were formally coronated. The poets and singers gave the regnal title of Tubi Yoinongda Nongda Lairen Pakhangba.⁵⁶ According to Shanglen Puba Puya⁵⁷ the coronation was performed on 1st Saturday of the Meitei month of Kalen (June/July). The chief of four leading clans Angom Chief Puleiromba, Khunthiba of Luwang, Ponglahen of Moirang and Arong of Khuman clan fetched water from Nongjeng on the Kangla and poured on the body of the king and queen. Scholars and priests, singers and poets, the 64 nobles were present. Clothes were changed and the king and queen sat below the parasol. The coronation robes were presented to Pakhangba by Puleiromba, the Angom Chief. Chanting from the precedent, in later period King's coronation robes were presented by the Angom Chief who occupied a higher ritual position though politically he occupied a titular position as Angom Ningthou (Angom Chief) in the court of Pakhangba. The royal drum was beaten. The king and queen were raised to the Kanglamen and the final ceremony of installation of the king was performed.

Thus after a hard struggle against his own kinsmen, the Khabas and Poireiton, Pakhangba was installed as the king at Kangla with the great support from the Angom Chief Pureiromba, Luwang Chief Langba Langmaiba and Mangang Chief Apanba whose historicity is yet to be established. Other tribes and clans extended help and loyalty to him. He was also given the title of Meitingu or Meidingu.

Reign of Pakhangba

Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was an extraordinarily gifted ruler. Though the background of this prince before he became the ruler was comparatively unknown, the reforms he introduced during the reign laid the foundation of the social and political structure, and cultural and religious pattern of the Meiteis. Perhaps later historical and literary sources made an exaggerated praise of Pakhangba as every institution, law, reform and convention had been made to trace its origin to this prince. Had he been really innovative and reformative as it has been projected, Pakhangba perhaps had a high level of awareness in the political, social, religious and cultural affairs and his background must have connection with a superior culture or civilisation.

Pakhangba was truly the maker of Manipur⁵⁸. He was the first coronated historical ruler who founded a new dynasty called Ningthouja, and the progenitor of a clan of the same name which was gradually evolved into the Meitei society, state and nation. Definitely at the coronation of the new king, the chiefs of the three major clans, Puleiromba of Angom clan, Langba Langmaiba of Luwang clan and Apanba of the Mangangs had already accepted his suzerainty over their clans. In a sense, the selection of Pakhangba as the ruler of the Meitei confederacy and Ningthouja dynasty was an instance of popular sanction for a king.

Pakhangba was eulogised by his poets as the Sun surrounded by twenty seven stars⁵⁹ in the sky. The whole infrastructure of the administration was first provided by the three clans. The nobles and ministers who joined the king were clearly enumerated in Pakhangba Phambal.⁶⁰ It has been conjectured by the 18th century historians of Manipur that Nongda Lairen Pakhangba had his council of ministers traditionally known Ningthou Pongba Tara⁶¹ and 64 Phamdous. During his reign the following departments of the state were created :

1. Laipham Shanglen, a court of justice.
2. Kuchu Shanglen,
3. Khanba Shanglen,
4. Naharup Shanglen,
5. Pacha Loisang, court dealing with women affairs and presided over by Queen Leisna, wife of Pakhangba.

Settlement of Migrants

In the beginning of Pakhangba's reign, the migrants who came to settle in Imphal valley were led by different leaders — Poireiton, Arong, Nganurol, Ningthoubi, Takhuk-Lukhok. Poinaota led the five groups, Thongaren who refused to come with Poireiton came to Kangla later. Pakhangba settled them at different parts of Kangla kingdom.⁶²

1. Thongaren's group was settled at Nonglen Chingkhong and came to be known as Naharup.
2. Poireiton's group came to be known as Ahallup; but Poireiton has been projected as the progenitor of the Luwang clan by W.Yumjao Singh and settled at Lamdeng and as the founder of Poirei Kingdom by W.I. Singh. That all the Meiteis were the descendants of the Poireiton, is a far fetched theory. According to Pakhangba Nongkarol, as stated earlier Poireiton was made a chief of a village. (Khun Ningthou is a village chief).
3. The Nganhunthong's group was settled at Thanglihan.
4. Khabas were settled in the west and Nganba in the north-west.

Social Consolidation: Clans

After having achieved his political objective of occupying the throne at Kangla covering the Mangang, Angom and Luwang clan territories and having defeated the Khabas and Nganbas, Pakhangba became the recognised head of the Meitei confederacy, only the Khumans and Moirangs remained out of the confederacy. But in the social affairs, the Khuman and Moirangs had come under the fold of the Meiteis, though political autonomy was maintained for several centuries. The greatest achievement of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba was the social consolidation of the different ethnic groups and tribes under the seven clans. The Luwangs, the Angoms, Mangang (later on Ningthoujas), the Khabas, Nganbas, Sarang Leisangthem (Chenglei), the Khunans and the Moirang, came under the Meitei social confederacy. There were many social groups who after accepting political supremacy of the dynasty of Pakhangba accepted a status of a clan within the greater Meitei social fold. The word Meitei meant only the people who were directly within the clan of the founder of the dynasty. Poireis appear to be a name with a bigger social connotation than Meitei during the time of Pakhangba, but later on Meitei covered all the ethnic groups which were brought under seven clans. We do not have contemporary historical evidence of how Pakhangba created seven clans, though at least five tribes accepted the clanship under political supremacy and social confederacy, the Luwang, Angom, Mangangs, Khabas, Nganbas, Sarang-Leisangthems. Perhaps, later chronicles and writers under the directive of the rulers had described Pakhangba as the head of the seven clans and king of the Meiteis. The social integration of these tribes provided the strongest political support to Pakhangba's kingdom. Later writers had created myths in order to mystify the origin of the clans (salais) which were brought under the marriage rule known as Yek system.^{62A} Salai was originally an ethnic group or a tribe converted to a Meitei clan having a territory speaking a language or dialects, enjoying political, later on, social autonomy. And Yek is a social exogamous group within which marriage is not permissible. Elaborate customs were created, it is claimed, during the reign of Pakhangba. Now Yek and Salai are used almost in the same sense. The Yek-Salai is within the degree of prohibited relation. The following marriage rules were according to tradition believed to be adopted during the reign of Pakhangba.

Yek-Salai

Yek Salai means the kinship relation of the clan and lineages and sublineages having a common ancestor.

Mungnaba

It means persons having a common maternal grand mother of the fifth degree and persons falling within the different sumames with a common maternal grandfather and the later relationship so established have blood relationship called the **Ee Mungnaba** whereas the term is a kinship terminology called **Mingin Mungnaba**.

Pendinnaba

Pendinnaba means persons belonging to different **Yek-Salais** but having a common maternal grand mother and such relationship caused by a woman having issues of more than one husband. Descendants of uterine brothers born of the great grandmother by more than one husband are said to be within the prohibited degree called **Leinung Pendinnaba**.

Shairuk Tinnaba

Shairuk Tinnaba means persons belonging to the same **Shairuk** (clan or lineage). This is also called **Salai lotpa** (clan concealed). **Shairuk Tinnaba** is of manifold nature. For example, the old Moirang and old Chenglei are of the same **Sairuk**, and so are prohibited to inter-marriage. **Shairuk Tinnaba** consists of different **shairuks** forming a particular group. They are those descendants whose ancestors at one time promised not to commit inter marriage between their descendants. It so happened from an incident causing the lives being saved by king as war victim from the victors in a battle field. **Shairuk Tinnaba** is divided into **Shairuk Achouba** and **Shairuk Macha**. Ordinary **Pendinnaba** excluding the **Leining Pendinnaba** is called **Shairuk Macha**.

Pee Tinnaba

It means persons having a common maternal ancestor.⁶³

The latter account of the appointment of the chiefs of the clans and demarcation of the clan land was not a correct position. True, the clan

chiefs occupied a subordinate position in the royal court like the Angom Ningthou, Chief of Angom, Luwang Ningthou, Chief of Luwang clan for many years after Pakhangba, the clans had to maintain their autonomy within the Meitei Kingdom.

Pakhangba Phambal records that Aton Marang Langsemba divided the agricultural and crop field.

Cultural Development: Horse Hockey

The Meitei culture took its roots during the reign of Pakhangba, then festivals were started by Charanba. Horse hockey was started during his reign with a maiden match between the chiefs of different regions. Laisna took a great role in organising the game of the horse hockey. On 1st Saturday of the Meitei month of Lamda, the game was played. People were gathered at Lamdaipung. The players of the horse hockey were given salutation by Pakhangba — seven players in the east and same number of players in the west. The king then gave the ball. Laisna offered milk, honey, fruits to the people gathered. Horse hockey was played in imitation of the old game played in the traditional age known as Hayachak.

Worship of Umanglais was Started

Regarding the religious beliefs, the Umanglais, the deities of the villages, who were originally ancestors were worshipped during his reign. But the worship of Sanamahi and Pakhangba appear to have not been started.

Last days of Pakhangba

The royal chronicles say that Nongda Lairen Pakhangba went to heaven giving a mystified end of his life. According to Pakhangba Phambal, Pakhangba and Laisna lived in constant fear of the Khabas who were defeated by Pakhangba. They used to live with the great risk. So they used to live at Leithanpok near Nungjeng pond at Kangla. It is allegorically mentioned that Pakhangba stayed with the gods in day time and lived as human at night time. Laisna, the envious wife requested her husband to make her a god in daytime. Pakhangba refused as Laisna was an immigrant in the band of Poireiton.

Pakhangba asked Laisna and her six friends, Chitnu, Thamnu, Phunu, Arainu, Thera Langba, Chanuton, Thangnu to come to Nungjeng for fishing one day. Pakhangba also proceeded to Nungjeng with six friends to meet Laisna and six girls at the lake. But a Khaba rebel named Huitao Tington Khaba Tousuba was waiting to ambush him. Khaba speared Pakhangba to death by a strong and sharp reed spear and then threw the dead body to the Nungjeng. The killer informed Laisna that he killed Pakhangba. Laisna picked up the dead body of Pakhangba. After Pakhangba's death, Laisna could not stay at Kangla and fled into hiding at Angom hills taking another name of Khoinu Ahongbi.⁶⁴ Pakhangba Nongkarol says that Pakhangba was called back to heaven. According to another account, Pakhangba was conspired to be killed by his own son Khui or Khuyoi Tompok with the machination of the Khabas. The heavenly rule of Pakhangba was a myth created by later writers. It is most likely that he was killed by the Khabas or by the conspiracy of the Khabas.

Chronology of Pakhangba

The chronology of Pakhangba is one of the controversial issues in the history of Manipur. The chronology of this king and his dynasty was prepared between the 15th and 18th centuries. The absence of the contemporary chronology makes the fixing of the date of Pakhangba a difficult task for the historians. A review of the existing evidences on the date of this great king leads to further confusion due to multiplicity of conflicting evidences.

The celebrated Cheitharol Kumbaba, the royal chronicle of Ningthouja dynasty refers to different eras used in fixing the chronology of rulers of the dynasty. It refers to Kalyabda, (Kali age), Sakabda (Saka era), then Kangleipak era or Chandrabda in eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Vikrama era was adopted for some time in pre-Gambhir Singh's period. The Cheitharol Kumbaba refers to the Manipuri system of counting year known as Cheithaba started during the 15th century (1405 + 78 = 1483 A.D.) So the pre-Kiyamba chronology was not a contemporaneous one but was reconstructed by astrologers who were conversant with both Manipuri and Hindu astronomy and astrology.

According to Cheitharol Kumbaba, Nongda Lairen Pakhangba ascended on throne in 3135 Kalyabda and that it refers to the establishment of Saka era fortyfive years after his accession.⁶⁵ Since Saka Era or Sakabda was started at 78 A.D. The accession of

Pakhangba was fixed at an year fortyfive years before it: $78-45 = 33$ A.D. According to this stray reference, Pakhangba's date has been fixed from 33 A.D. Perhaps this date was fixed on the differences between Kalyabda and beginning of Sakabda. 3135 Kalyabda (33 A.D.) and Sakabda 1 A.D. 78). It is not known how Pakhangba was made to ascend the throne in 3135 Kalyabda. These perhaps were written into Cheitharol Kumbaba when Manipuri astronomers and astrologers became conversant with Hindu (Sanskrit) astronomy and astrology in the eighteenth century or in the early nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Pakhangba was assigned a long reign of 120 years, in Cheiharol Kumbaba and other literary works. Many eyebrows were raised over this extraordinary length of time. It was perhaps based on the traditional longevity of man being 120 years in the Konna Chak the traditional age of the Meiteis as in the traditional⁶⁷ reckoning of time, Pakhangba belonged to Konnachak. So his reign was given a blanket period of 120 years. However, Pakhangba Nongkarol says that Pakhangba was recalled to heaven 12 years after his accession to the throne of Kangla⁶⁸ thus showing that Nongda Lairen ruled only for 12 years. Alternative chronology was put forward by Pukhambam Parijat in 1917 that Pakhangba's regnal period was 296-416 Sakabda (374-497 A.D.). This chronology had shifted Pakhangba's reign from 1st/2nd century A.D. to 3rd/4th century of Christian era.

As pointed out earlier, Manipur adopted an era known as Kangleipak era (Kangleipak Sak) which was later on called Chandrabda. This Kangleipak era was according to Cheitharol Kumbaba, founded during the reign of Bhagyachandra in 1760 A.D. (1682 S.E.)⁶⁹ on the basis of a calendar prepared by an astrologer named Khumbung Maniram Singh Chandra Sidhanta.⁷⁰ This era was 971 years in A.D. 1760, its beginning must have been 789 A.D. (1760 A.D. - 971 = 789 A.D.). Now a question arises why the Kangleipak era or Chandrabda was made to begin from 789 A.D.⁷¹ The beginning of an era usually was founded on an important historical event. If a ruling dynasty created an era, it was based on the foundation of the ruling dynasty or accession of the first ruler on the throne. Therefore, when Bhagyachandra agreed to the establishment of a new era, it must have been fixed on the date or supposed to be the date of the reign or accession of the founder of his dynasty namely Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. This theory was collaborated by Pandit Raj Atombapu Sharma,⁷² when he writes, "During the reign of Bhagyachandra, there was one Khumbong Chandramani. He was a favourite of Shri Govinda and established an era in Manipur. This era was started from the year

of the coronation of the great and famous king Pakhangba. It was started from 788 (9) of the Christian era.⁷³ This Pandit introduced the era for calendar and other astrological calculations". So according to this era, Pakhangba might have ascended the throne of Kangla in 789 A.D. thus pushing further the reign of Pakhangba to the later period of the eighth century A.D. These three dates 33 A.D., 374 A.D. and 789 A.D. are more or less conjectures prepared many years after Pakhangba. In the absence of archaeological documents specially numismatics or epigraphic evidence it is very difficult to accept these dates mentioned in the chronicles dealing with the period of Pakhangba. W. Ibohal Singh has proposed another date for Pakhangba (980-1020 A.D.) in the tenth century on the basis of demographic hypothesis which is not methodologically possible to accept.⁷⁴ But the hypothesis of giving 120 years to Pakhangba cannot be accepted. Because of the lack of contemporary evidence of his reign we cannot assign the exaggerated achievements alluded to him by the later chroniclers of his successors who deified him. 12 years of reign given in Pakhangba Nongkarol written by Angom Gopi during the reign of Garibaniwaz, if it was not a manuscriptological error, cannot be easily ignored.

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Evolution of the Meitei State

Tribalism to Feudalism

With the foundation of the Ningthouja dynasty, the social and political development of the Meites was centered around the ruling dynasty. The reconstruction of the history of Manipur in the early period was based on the chronicles of the Ningthouja dynasty supplemented by other clan geneologies and some literary sources. This approach is definitely lopsided as the history of other ethnic groups or clan principalities is to be integrated into the gradually expanding history of the realm. This process of the evolution of the social, economic and political system of the Meiteis should not be projected as a mere narrative of the skeletal political history based on the chronicles. Yet the inadequacies and limitations of these sources confine the reconstruction of the history to the evolution of kingdom of Manipur from the primitive tribal state to feudal state in the fifteenth century A.D.

Successors of Pakhangba

Khuiyoi to Mpok: Age of Technological Development

Despite the attempts made by the chroniclers and writers to deify Nongda Lairen Pakhangba and his immediate six successors, they were historical rulers. Pakhangba, according to the royal chronicles, was succeeded by his son Khuyoi Tompok. After the assassination of Pakhangba by the Khabas, his Queen Laisna fled the capital and took

refuge among the Selloi-Langmais in Nongmaiching hills¹. Khuyoi Tompok was portrayed in some tradition as a patricide as he was conspired by the Khabas into killing his own father but it is not supported by any historical evidence. According to a popular tradition after his father's death, nobles of the realm decided to coronate Khuyoi Tompok with the help of the chiefs of the Luwang, Angom, Khuman and Moirang clans.² During and after his accession to the throne of Kangla, his aunt, Sira Kongtingnu, sister of Pakhangba played an important role. Khuyoi Tompok came into close contact with the Shelloi Langmais who gave shelter to his mother and himself. The Shelloi Langmais were a kindred group of the Angom who gave strong support to Pakhangba in the struggle for the throne. According to Ningthourol Lambuba, Khuyoi Tompok married a Shelloi Langmai girl named Nongmainu Ahongbi which is corroborated by Chada Laihui, an account of the queens of Ningthouja dynasty.³ The Shelloi Langmais are projected in Ningthourol Lambuba as living in a primitive state of society. "It is said that the Shelloi Langmais of that period did not construct houses. They took shelter in the root crevices of big trees or tree tops where the bending tops of bamboos covered the trees. They did not cook food but lived on wild roots and honey. The thunder and lightening were their horror, and they took that natural phenomenon as (like) the lowering of the sky to crush them. They were naked".⁴ Khuyoi Tompok is projected to have civilized the tribe and their girl Nongmainu Ahongpi, a beautiful girl from a family of collectors of honey and wax from the jungles.

The reign of Khuyoi Tompok appears to be an age of several technological development. He was associated with a number of innovations. He was most popularly known as a ruler who invented the drum. He explored the forests of the north western part of his kingdom along with the royal priest Konde Maiba who was also a royal priest of his father.⁵ His greatest achievement was the innovation of the drum which was used during wartime, dance, music and other social and religious events. He was described by the chronicles as the inventor of drum.⁶ He went with Konde Maiba and felled a big tree for making of the drum out of the hollowed log. A deer was hunted, its skin was used for the drum and it failed to produce any sound. Later a cattle or according to some gayal, which was the bride price of Pakhangba's sister Sira Kongtingnu was killed. Its hide was dried on bamboo pole and used for covering the hollowed log which was fastened by cane and the sound of a drum was produced.⁷ This innovation was celebrated by

the king with great fanfare. The drum making was a symbol of and a stage of technological development and cultural attainment of the country.

Technical innovation in metallurgy was also recorded in the chronicle that bronze was smelted and bell-metal was cast. The bell-metal gong, Senbung was manufactured during his reign. The gong is a significant cultural link between Manipur and upper Burma and Thailand. The weaving was further developed and printing of designs of female clothes; dyeing in colour, specially red was also innovated.⁸ Thus bronze making, weaving and printing of design, and dyeing were developed in his reign. According to popular traditions, invention of silk rearing, boat making with the help of the Lurwang Chief and exploration of minerals were also attributed to his reign.⁹

Cheitharol Kumbaba assigns 110 years 154-264 A.D. to his reign, which was disputed by W.I. Singh who proposed a reign of 35 years (1020-55 A.D.). Both these dates were conjectural. According to Pakhangba Nongkarol, he went to heaven; R.K. Jhalajit opines that Khuyoi Tompok and his five successors abdicated their thrones in their old age and took to Vedic system of Vanaprastha which is of course an incredible hypothesis.

Taothing Mang: The Dredger

Khuyoi Tompok left two sons and one daughter, Yoimongba, Taothingmang and Lairok Lembi.¹⁰ At the time of their father's death, according to tradition, the two princes were minor boys, the elder was eleven years and younger was eight.¹¹ It is not known how, the younger brother Taothingmang was the king and his elder brother assisted him in the administration of the country. Taothingmang ascended the throne at a young age of eight and was married at eighteen to Hao-nu-Khu of Angom clan. Taothingmang was well known for his great work of draining the marshes of Manipur valley and dredging its rivers and streams.¹² The topography of Manipur valley was such that rains would cause flood as the marshes could not be drained away by the narrow rivers and streams, thus affecting the agricultural production. On the other hand, lack of rains caused drought as most of the marshes and rivers were rain-fed. The innumerable lakes and marshes including the great Loktak, when properly drained, provided agricultural lands for cultivation. But only the great river Turel Achouba (Imphal or Manipur River) drained the whole Manipur Valley

through the Chin hills of Burma to the Chindwin of Burma, then to the great Irrawaddy. Thus it was quite natural that the Ningthouja ruler took up the great irrigation works in his kingdom which involved the dredging of the marshes, digging of small canals, widening and deepening of the river beds which drained the water from the marshes. Throughout history, the rulers shouldered the responsibility of dredging the rivers, which was both the indicator and source of their political power. R.K. Jhalajit Singh rightly observes, "If the Manipuris were to survive, it was of the utmost importance that the marshes should be drained. The problem of draining them was interconnected with that of dredging the rivers; for, the water of the marshes had to be let off into the rivers".¹³ The Imphal and the Iril river system covered practically the whole valley of Manipur including the Ningthouja Kingdom. Cheitharol Kumbaba refers to the dredging of these two rivers by Taothingmang and his brother Yoimongba. These dredgings involved human labour which was possible only with the mass participation of the people of the kingdom. We may believe that the Lallup system which was the feudal organisation for rendering of service by the subjects to the king might have taken some rudimentary forms during this period. It is very clear that Taothingmang had the powerful loyalty of his subjects. It is recorded in the royal chronicle that the two royal brothers themselves personally participated in the dredging of the Imphal and Iril rivers in their upper reaches. They reached at the confluence of the two rivers at Lilong. "The king's brother dug the course of the river towards the west to avoid the territory of the Angoms and then proceeded southwards. After sometime, the king attempted to cross the Angom territory to overtake his brother quickly"¹⁴ Here one Telheiba, an archer of Funan village belonging to Angom clan¹⁵ challenged Taothingmang to a fight for intrusion into his land. The king was unarmed and was wounded by the arrow of Telheiba and the place where it happened was called Nganglou (blood-red place). Taothingmang followed his brother and overtook him at Lokha-Haokha where a giant bird, a man eater (Kakyen Meengamba) was creating a terror to the population by picking up and killing man at its will.

The two royal brothers entrapped the giant bird and killed it. The two wings of the bird were severed; one was thrown into the Chingnunghoot, the deep gorge of Manipur river flowing through Chin Hills of Burma and the other was thrown into Loktak; the place where it was thrown into was called Ithing now an islet of the great lake.

Reference to a giant bird may be a reminiscence of the prehistoric days when such giant birds were plenty. It was believed that Taothingmang conquered Lokkha-Haokha and the two brothers returned to the capital. The conquest of Lokkha-Haokha is regarded by a historian as the "first contact between the Ningthouja and hillmen recorded in Cheitharol Kumbaba".¹⁶ Lokkha-Haokha is identified with a place of the same name near Sugnu in southeast valley in the east bank of the Imphal river.¹⁷ The hold of the Ningthouja, if it was extended to this village, must have been along the river course which passed through the Khuman territory. But the Angom whose princesses were married to Taothingmang and his father and the Khumans were independent clans.

Taothingmang was supposed to have reigned for one hundred and ten years according to Cheitharol Kumbaba.¹⁸ Taothingmang had a successful reign. He was described as "one of the makers of Manipur. His wisdom, action, adventure and skill greatly benefited this country"¹⁹. He had according to a court poet, a mysterious end of life merging with the supreme being.

Khui Ningomba

After the death of Taothingmang, his son Khui Ningomba ascended the throne of Kangla.²⁰ He married a girl named Haonuhai of Haokha tribe.²¹ He continued his father's works of dredging the river and strengthening the embankments of the rivers and stream of the kingdom. According to tradition he was supposed to have constructed a five-rooms palace building at Kangla but the common people were not allowed to construct beyond four rooms.²² During the coronation of Pakhangba he stayed in three room palace house. It has been suggested that the kingdom had become more powerful, and Luwang principality became greatly weakened but remained an important centre of learning.²³ Khui Ningomba is credited with the introduction of the worship of Lal Leima (goddess of war) in the Manipuri month of Mera (October) to strengthen the military power of the kingdom.²⁴ His queen is also referred to have participated in the Mentongba ceremony performed in the month of Mera which was known as Mera-Mentongba.²⁵ He had a reign of 15 years.²⁶

Pengsiba

Pengsiba, the son and successor of Khui Ningomba according to the royal chronicles had an unsuccessful reign of fifteen years like his father.²⁷ His queen was Laiton-Khu. She was instrumental in the

conquest of a tribal village with one hundred houses.²⁸ However, traditions refer to his activities of which mention may be made of the diversion of the course of (Imphal) Turel Achouba, a river flowing through the valley from north to south, which caused innumerable floods to the kingdom, in the upper reaches of the river in the northern hills of Manipur.²⁹ He is reputed to have defeated a number of chiefs of neighbouring countries which are more imaginative and conjectural than real.³⁰

Kaokhangba

Kaokhangba was the son of Pengsiba who succeeded his father. Cheitharol Kumbaba assigns him a reign of seventeen years.³¹ He married a girl named Leitonhal³² of his mother's clan.³³ He had rather an unsuccessful reign.

Naokhamba

Naokhamba was succeeded by his son Nokhamba who was the last of the so called divine rulers. The chronicle records, Naokhamba, as the name rightly indicates, the last of the divine rulers returns to divinity like the morning star fading away and merges into the light of the approaching dawn heralding the coming of the sun³⁴ His reign of seventeen years was a period of expansion of the kingdom which was felt by other tribes.³⁵ He defeated a Chenglei chief named Thangji Khongchronba and forcibly married his wife Yaorei Leiyathi Khunkam Leinamung, a girl of Yaoreiba lineage (Mayengba) of Luwang clan.³⁶

Such incidents of marrying the wife of the defeated enemy are found in history creating problems of succession among the sons of the rulers. At the time of marriage she was carrying a five month old child. A son was born and named Naophang Ahanba who grew up as a prince of the dynasty. Another son, Naophangba and a daughter Yoikum Chenbi were also born of the queen.³⁷ The marriage of the Luwang girl by Naokhamba was an important event tightening the traditional alliance of the two principalities since the time of Pakhangba. Naokhamba's contemporary in Luwang principality was Nongbal Hongnem Luwang Ningthou Punshiba.

Naokhamba was represented to have constructed bunds, a big one, a small one at Yaorei Khunpilok in the upper reaches of Imphal river and controlled the thickly forested northern hills like Lairowching (Maram

hills). Perhaps these bunds were constructed to control floods in the valley. He was a deeply religious king having worshipped all the gods and goddesses of the Meitei Pantheon in which he was advised by the Luwang chief.³⁸

The family of Yaoreiba to which Naokhamba's queen belonged became rich and prosperous due to their good rearing of livestock, like goat, pigs and poultry including fowl and duck. There was a quarrel between the Yaoreiba and Kaireiba families over the loss of the livestock. Later on a calf was sacrificed to Pakhangba as a sacrificial compromise between them. Then the two families settled in well placed villages in different areas and became prosperous.

Naophangba

Naophangba was an important ruler who has been referred to in a number of religious, ethical, social and political treatises as a king to whom was revealed the teachings of several religious preceptors. After the death of Naokhamba, there was a dispute over the succession to the throne of Kangla. Naophangba's half brother, Naophang Ahanba claimed that as he was the elder prince he should be coronated as the king. But the people objected to his claim as they knew that he was actually the son of the Chenglei chief, Thangyi Khongchromba. He complained to his mother why his right to the throne should be denied to him. The queen dowager told him the truth that he was actually the son of the late Chenglei chief who was defeated and killed by Naokhamba who married his wife who was the mother of Naophangba; but he was born and brought up in the royal family. But Naophangba was the real son of Naokhamba, born of the queen dowager. Naturally Naophang-Ahanba was shocked to hear the revelations of his mother. However, the queen decreed that the decision should be taken by an ordeal by water. The whole community gathered to see the two princes making a dip into the water and whoever the guilty would come out of the water and the one who could dive longer in the water would be the winner. As anticipated and foretold, Naophang-Ahanba came out of the water first before Naophangba. So by divination, the choice of the king to the throne was decided; Naophangba was declared the king. Naophang-Ahanba was disappointed and humiliated. He left the capital to go into hiding. He died very soon; what a shame, the foster prince must have felt at the irony of fate he had suffered.³⁹ Naophangba married two wives, Kaireima, daughter of Waklen Tongyai, the

younger brother of Yoirangpok Punshiba, the king of Thoubal, and Yaoreibi of Luwang clan. The Khuman princess, Kaireima gave birth to Sameirang and the Luwang princess was the mother of Thamanglang.⁴⁰ The Angoms were traditionally, the wife giving group for the Ningthouja rulers; the alliance with the Luwang and the Khumans of Thoubal was the extension and consolidation of the Ningthouja's political supremacy.

Naophangba is also credited with the construction of a seven storeyed Kangla palace building.⁴¹ During his reign the treatise on the construction of the royal palace, Kangla Houba was written by a scholar named Laiba of Ashangbam family⁴² The preparation of this treatise was an outcome of a controversy created by a religious preceptor from Bengal who came to Manipur during his reign.

Abortive Religious Reform

According to a seventeenth century text on religious belief named Shakok Lamlen⁴³ during the reign of Naophangba, a religious leader from Bengal (Pangan guru = Bangan guru, sometimes wrongly interpreted as Muslim guru as Muslims are known in Manipur as Pangan, a corruption from Bengal) visited the court of the king. He influenced the king to stop the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Meiteis and took a new religion, perhaps, a form of popular Hinduism. He stopped the practice of burial of the dead and introduced cremation. On his advice, meat was declared as a tabooed food and meat eating was banned. This created a religious upheaval in the realm. The details of the new religion are not described in Shakok Lamlen. The king was trying to reconstruct a new royal palace and he sought the advice of the new religious preceptor who did not understand the Meitei canonical texts on the subject. When the layout of the Kangla was made, holes were dugged to raise the pillars, according to the text, blood gushed out of the holes. The new preceptor could not stop it. At that time, a thirteen year old scholar named Ashangbam Laiba came to the palace and told the king that the design, structure and location of new palace were wrong and the holes touched the body of Taoroinai, the dragon or serpent form (vehicle) of royal deity Pakhangba. The king asked the young scholar to stop it. Laiba brought one big boar which licked away all the blood. On his advice, all the pillars prepared for the new building were thrown into the Loktak lake. Then he made a new layout for the Kangla palace, collected wood, thatch, bamboo, cane and other materials from different hills of Manipur. His advice was

written into a treatise known as Kangla-Houba (Construction of Kangla). No mention was made of the guru from Bengal. Evidently he and his new religion were rejected by the king and the people. It was the first instance of Hindu missionary attempt to convert the Meitei king and according to Cheitharol Kumbaba, Naophangba had a reign of ninety years.⁴⁴ Pakhangba Nongkarol gives a reign of seventy years. He was a good administrator and a deeply religious man. He was reported to be a good hunter. He was also a patron of learning and scholarship.

Sameirang

The chronicles record that Sameirang succeeded his father Naophangba. His reign inaugurated a period of consolidation and extension of the Ningthouja political power at the cost of other clan principalities. An eminent historian writes, "The consolidation of Manipur was begun in his reign. We have already noticed that at that time when the Ningthoujas established themselves in and around Imphal, the valley was divided into seven principalities. From the time of Sameirang the Ningthoujas embarked on the policy of absorbing the principalities of other clans in their kingdom. This was an arduous long struggle. But it was worth trying. We do not know what would have been the fate of Manipur had it remained divided into small principalities".⁴⁵

Sameirang involved his half brother Thamanglang in the administration of the country. Thamanglang's role was so important that in Khoibu inscription, the names of king Sameirang and Thamanglang are recorded as if they were of equal status. Cheitharol Kumbaba simply records that Thamanglang started the Yengkhom lineage of the Ningthouja clan.⁴⁶ According to the Ningthouja clan geneology, Thamanglang had two sons, namely, Chingsu Keiromba and Sarik Likhomba. Chingsu Keiromba had two sons, Khonglamba and Nong-luba. Khonglamba's descendents became the Yengkhom lineage of the Ningthouja.⁴⁷ Since Sameirang's time, the collateral line of ruling Ningthouja was branched off. While retaining the endogenous relation with Ningthouja clan, other lineages were started as mentioned earlier like Yengkhom, Keithenlakpam and Wairom.

Meitei-Angom Conflict

Sameirang's grandfather Kaokhangba had already defeated the Chengleis who had lost their political identity and were absorbed into

the social fold of the Meiteis. But other clan with whom Sameirang came into clash was the Angom. The Angoms were the traditional allies of the Ningthoujas since the time of Pakhangba. They had always maintained their autonomy despite their alliance with the Ningthouja. The Angom alliance was based more or less on matrimonial relation. The Angoms were a sort of bride giving ally of the Meitei kings. It appears that their friendly relation broke down when the Ningthoujas felt strong enough to expand their territory. Sameirang fought against the Angoms, thus started a long period of Angom-Ningthouja rivalry. Sameirang invaded the Angom principality which was to the east of the kingdom of the Kangla and killed the Angom chief Kwakpa Thawanthaba⁴⁸. As to the identification of Kwakpa Thawanthaba, it has been suggested that he was the chieftain "more probably of Astro Asiatic group of people like Funan, Maring and others who merged with the Nongbals"⁴⁹ But this appears to be more a hypothetical than actual historical fact. In the geneology of the Angom clan, Kwakpa Langthaba (Thawanthaba) is recorded as the twelfth ruler of Angom principality from the progenitor of the clan, Puleiromba⁵⁰ who was an elder contemporary of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. Interesting enough, Sameirang was the eighth ruler from Pakhangba. Kwakpa was the son of Charol Phaba, the Angom chief and his mother was Kukramba Ningui Phaba Chanu. The Angom principality gave tribute to Sameirang.

The territory of the kingdom was further extended and reached the Maring hills in the east. The recent discovery of a stone inscription in the Maring village of Khoibu clearly established the conquest of the Maring hills by Sameirang and his brother Thamanglang. The inscription deals with a royal order for the maintenance of a deity at Khoibu village which was a military outpost of the Meities which was established by orders of Sameirang and Thamanglang, born of Yaoreiba⁵¹. The summary of the information is thus: It is place of King Sameirang and his brother Thamanglang, decedents of Yaoreibi lady. In the fort of Khoibu Maring, the attendant of which was to look after the deity and temple, the preparation of wine was forbidden.⁵²

Our initial enthusiasm about this inscription waned when it was found that the inscription was issued by king Marjit Singh (1813-19) which recorded a past historical event. However, we may regard this event as authentic. Sameirang married the daughter of Thing of the Kambong group. Kambong was a kindred group of Thanga-Kambong who constituted a community in Manipur valley. Their locality was to

the west of the Ningthouja Kingdom. His regnal year according to Cheitharol Kumbaba was 518 to 568 A.D. But his long reign of fifty years was rejected by W.I.Singh, who suggested the period 1171-86 A.D. thus assigning him only fifteen years of rule.

Ura Konthouba

Ura Konthouba was the regnal title of Panam, the son of Samromang. His father had extended the Ningthouja kingdom through matrimonial alliance and military aggrandisement. He continued his father's policy. He was connected with the Khuman as his grandmother was a Khuman princess. Despite the Ningthouja conflict with the Angom his son, Hongnem Yoi Khunjao married a girl from the Shelloi Langmai, a kindred group of the Angoms. He also married Nongjengnu, a girl of Khuman clan of Thoubal. He gave his daughter in marriage to a Moirang prince who was kept at Kangla. He was called Ura Konthouba as during the military expedition after the coronation ceremony, he caught a bird called Ura.

Despite the matrimonial relation, the conflict with the Angom became inevitable. Cheitharol Kumbaba and Ningthourol Lembuba⁵³ mention that Shelloi Langmai had their principality at Nongmaijing hills. Once they were planning to invade Ningthouja kingdom after their conquest of Haokap, Chingsang and Ngangloi villages to the west of Imphal valley in the foothills of Koubru range. The Angom forces crossed the kingdom of Urakonthouba without his permission. They passed by a fishing weir at a marshy lake which Nongbal Kadem, a slave of the king was looking after; when Kadem heard the marching warriors, he pretended to be dead and laid among the dead and rotten fish. The Shelloi Langmais thought that the fisherman was dead and decided that they would take his head after returning from their military expedition. The Shelloi Langmais crossed the Naga stream. Kadem reported to the king of the military expedition of the Shelloi Langmais. The king immediately summoned all his nobles and warriors and informed that the Shelloi Langmais had crossed the Meitei principality to conquer the Loibi hills and they would invade Poirei country. He wanted to make a counter attack on the Shelloi Langmais that very night with horse soldiers equipped with sword, spear and shield. The force under the command of Ura Konthouba ambushed the returning Shelloi Langmais at the Naga stream beyond the Haokhongchamba bridge which was constructed by Naokhongchamba

with tin and copper. The returning troops were killed. Many heads were gathered at the fishery. Urakonthouba averted the Angom invasions by pre-emptive action. But the Shelloi Langmais retaliated by attacking his son Khongnem Yoi Khunjaoba whose adventure would be described in the subsequent paragraphs. The last days of Urakonthouba were not happy for him. In the absence of his son who was being settled in Khuman principality, the Angoms were waiting for the death of the king to attack. After his death, according to Cheitharol Kumbaba, there was no king for five years.⁵⁴ R.K. Jhalajit Singh suggests that the Angom overran the Ningthouja kingdom for five years.⁵⁵ Hence, the interregnum. His regnal period according to Cheitharol Kumbaba was 568-658 A.D. Thus he had an extraordinarily long reign of ninety years which is incredible.⁵⁶ The reference made by Ningthourol Lambuba to the use of copper and tin sheets in the construction of a bridge over Naga stream by a Luwang man named Naokhongchamba, the use of cavalry with all the military accoutrements shows further development of technology and military skill and weaponry. It is for the first time that the employment of cavalry was well described in the chronicles. The recent discovery of a bell metal coin with a letter "Wu" in ancient Meitei script has been opined by an archaeologist that it was an abbreviation of the name of the ruler; and evidently it might have been Ura Konthouba as there was no other king with the name starting with the letter "Wu"⁵⁷

Therefore, Ura Konthouba issued bell metal coin in his name. This indicates the beginning of monetisation of the barter economy of the country. The use of metals in the building of bridge in Manipur is meaningful, as the building materials were mostly made of wood, bamboo and thatch. There were already the nobility with their military soldiers, the slaves who looked after king's fishery and the Lallup system was already in existence. The military organisations were already well developed.

Naothingkhong

With the accession of Naothingkhong, the history of Manipur has taken more or less a reliable form due to the availability of historical source materials. Though Cheitharol Kumbaba's record is still sketchy. Ningthourol Lambuba gives fairly good account of Naothingkhong. Over and above these chronicles, there are two very reliable historical

texts, namely Naothingkhong Phambal,⁵⁸ (coronation of Naothingkhong) and Chingurenbi Khonglup⁵⁹.

Ura Konthouba died in the absence of his only son, the Crown Prince Hongem Yoi Khunjaoba whose adventures before his accession are being described in these paragraphs. He was at that time in Luwang principality when he was summoned by his mother to occupy the throne of Kangla which was being threatened by the Angom depredations. The Royal chronicle says that between the death of Ura Konthouba and succession of Naothingkhong, there was an interval of five years when there was no king. In order to put an end to anarchy that must have prevailed, the prince was called up by his mother to accept the throne of the Kangla under Ningthouja dynasty.

Early life

King Ura Konthouba appears to have been a strict disciplinarian and who was very conscious of the education of his only son Hongnem Yoi Khunjaoba who was a delinquent child. In order to escape the wrath of his father, the young prince at the age of 10⁶⁰, ran away from the Kangla and went to live along the Shelloi Langmais in Nongmaiing Hills to the east of the kingdom. He grew up among the Angom clansmen and ultimately married a Langmai girl named Pitanga and they lived in her parents' house. This is a first reference to the matrilocal residence among the Meiteis in history. The poet describes the love between the young couple, a young married girl full of hope and aspirations for her lover-husband who was ultimately to become the king of the Meiteis. It reads like a typical story of a prince in exile and a simple and devoted tribal girl of the Shelloi Langmais. Her parents distinctly knew the identity of the prince and it was concealed for obvious reasons.

When Ura Konthouba ambushed the Shelloi Langmais at the Naga stream it created a great tension among the latter and aroused a threat of revenge among them. They came to know the identity of Hongnem Yoi Khunjaoba and immediately attacked the prince who was staying at the house of Pitanga who helped her husband escape by a stratagem to the Khuman country where the prince took shelter. Why he did not return to his father's kingdom and why he did not take his wife to the land of his exile? The Khuman country could not be properly identified, though W.I. Singh, located somewhere at Patsoi to the west of present Imphal. The prince fell in love with a Khuman Princess

named Santing Nganbi daughter of the Khuman chief Amukoi or Punshi Yoimoiba.

From the Khuman place, he was sent by his father-in-law, Amukoi, to Luwang country to get instruction in administrative affairs. When he was in Luwang country, the chief was Hongnem with a title of Luwang Ningthou Punshiba. The Luwang chief died when the prince was still in his principality. After some time his father died and he was summoned by his mother to ascend the throne of the Meiteis at Kangla.

When Pitanga, his first wife heard of the coronation of Naothingkhong, she came to the palace to meet her husband who had become the king with the natural hope of becoming a queen herself. But she found the Khuman princess sitting on the left side of the king. Pitanga was disappointed and she died of shock. Naothingkhong repented by making Pitanga a deity to be worshipped as Yumjao Lairembi by the royal family.⁶² Naothingkhong was well equipped by the trials and tribulations of his recent sojourn in the principalities of the neighbouring clans and wisdom of the instruction from the great scholar-philosopher Luwang chief, Hongnem Luwang Ningthou Punshiba. He was the first prince in the history of Manipur to have been exposed to such adventures and tragedies.

Military Exploits: Mangangamba, the conqueror of Mangangs

Ningthourol Lambuba speaks very highly of the military skill, courage and bravery of Naothingkhong. The king personally led three military expeditions and made hand to hand fights with the enemies. His first recorded expedition was against the Mangangs who were a tribe living in the Loijing hills now a part of the Koubru Leimaton range to the west of Imphal valley. He raided a Mangang village in which he defeated three brothers Langa, Naohal and Yoicharol and confiscated their pigs and fowls. In another village of the Mangang, he defeated the tribal warriors led by their chief Mangang Khun-Kucha Atengba. In their military encounters Ningthourol Lambuba⁶² describes that Naothingkhong could jump up to the height of sixty shields and that of 10 cattles. He captured a large number of tribal women, children, drums, gong (made of bell metal) and copper made musical instrument (bugle like) called Tharao-chi used for ritual purposes. From this expedition he was known as the Mangang Ngamba, the victor of the Mangang. Who were these Mangangs? Many think that they are a pre-Pakhangba clan of the Meitei of the same name who was equated or

absorbed into the Ningthoujas. If Ningthourol Lambuba is to be believed, they were a tribal community of western hills as they are referred to as Mangang Hao (tribe). W.I. Singh writes, "Since the event Mangang gradually came down from the hills and merged with the Poirei(Meitei) clans to which Naothingkhong belonged"⁶³

Defeat of Thanga Kambong

On his way back, as there was enough provision of food and wine for another raid; he led his force against the Thanga Kambongs who were a prosperous community in west Imphal valley. The people deserted their villages and ran away with their rice beer. Ultimately a battle was fought near the residence of a woman called Nongmainu Shoraton who was probably an Angom lady married to a Thanga Kambong. The Thanga Kambongs were defeated and huge quantity of booties was collected. Naothingkhong captured priests and priestesses (Maiba and Maibi) wealthy men and women, wine brewers both male and female.⁶⁴ He had relation with the Kabui of Haochong village of western hills, the Maram of northern hill, Chairen of Haokhul area of the south and Tangkhul of Koubu.

Contact with the Foreigners

One of the sheet anchors of history of Manipur was the visit (invasion) of Shamlung, a Shan prince from the state of Pong in Burma. He was the younger brother of Sukampha, the king of the Pong kingdom. It is for the first time that Pong was mentioned in the history of Manipur. Cheitharol Kumbaba simply records, "Samlung, brother of Pong king Sukhampha after his expedition to Pasha (Bengal) visited in Meitei country and stayed at Apong Ingkhoh (Homestead of the Pongs) for ten years. He proceeded to the north along the Iril river." On the basis of a Shan chronicle described by R.B. Pemberton in his famous Report of 1835 which was not traceable, W. McCulloch writes that Samlung visited Manipur in 777 A.D. According to Cheitharol Kumbaba it is 698 A.D. It was thought that the date of Samlung's forage to Manipur valley was antedated by five centuries by the chronicle mentioned by R.B. Pemberton. So the event would have occurred in 12th century. P. Gogoi thinks that Shan prince mentioned in this was not Shamlung but Kulofeng of Nanchao who reached Manipur in the 8th century A.D.⁶⁵ It is not likely as the hold of Nanchao did not reach Manipur

nor the chronicles mention the name of the country of Shamlung as Nanchao nor another country but Pong which was Mogaung of the Shan chronicles.

It is of interest that according to the chronological system adopted by him, W.I. Singh fixed the date of Shamlung's visit to Manipur in 1215 A.D.⁶⁶ He further writes, "when Naotheringkhong was ruling for some time an invader named Shamlung, a Pong prince appeared from the Northern side".

As Samlung was better equipped and organised, Naotheringkhong could not confront him and ultimately surrendered. It is believed that Samlung in this venture, employed several elephants. Unlike other Burmese conquerors, Samlung was a noble prince and did not commit any atrocities; rather he tried to uplift his victims who were in a very backward stage. When Samlung was in Manipur, he tried to improve habit and general way of life of the people.⁶⁷ Pemberton writes, "Samlung in consideration of extreme poverty of Manipur territory remitted all tributes, appeared to have directed the adoption of certain observance in dress and diet, instructed to improve the habit and manner of the people who were in lowest stage of civilization"⁶⁸ The standard of civilization was low, W.I. Singh writes, "Women were completely topless and fate of the common people were not happy. But the affluent section of the people wore dhoti and phanek (female sarong). The poor women also used the phanek. People were chewing dry fish all the time which made them look dirty. Samlung stopped it and introduced the chewing of betel nuts. Thus he introduced change in clothing and food habit".

Marriage with Chingurembi

Naotheringkhong married several wives mostly princesses from the neighbouring clan principalities. His chief queen was a Khuman princess. According to Chingurembi Khonglup, he married a Mayang princess. Her original name was not known nor her name was mentioned in other clan geneology of the Ningthouja. She was called Mayang Leima. Naotheringkhong's marriage to a princess from the Mayang country is, according to R.K. Jhalajit, one of the notable contacts between Manipur and the rest of India. Ningthouja prince among the Shelloi Langmais and Khuman and his marriage with Moirang princess which was regarded by some scholars as a later interpolation and his education at the Luwang principality showed the

great cordial relation between these clans at the social and cultural levels. Though the autonomy of the Khumans was clearly indicated, the Shelloi Langmais and the Luwangs had village level social organisations. The tribal or lineage base of the Meitei society was moving towards stratification though one can not clearly establish the formation of classes; the Meitei society was moving towards the feudal structure. At the top was the royalty with the kings and queens and the princes. As indicated by Ningthourol Lambuba and Naothingkhong Phambal Kaba, the king or the chiefs of clan principalities were the owners of the land and resources in their respective territorial boundaries. The massacre of the Shelloi Langmais by Ura Konthouba was the result of the illtreatment of the fisherman of the royal fishing weir, Kadem Soisenba (the keeper of the fishing weir). References are made to the nobility of the courts. When Ura Konthouba decided to ambush the unsuspecting Shelloi Langmais, he consulted his nobles who answered to his call. When the Khuman chief wanted to involve the Meitei prince in the state affairs of Khuman kingdom or deputing him for instruction in the state craft to the Luwang chief, scholar-philosopher, Punshiba, he consulted the Khuman nobles. When Naothingkhong was summoned to Kangla for coronation after the death of his father, he was accorded a royal welcome by the nobles of the court. But the Shelloi-Langmais and the Luwangs appear not to have any class as such, as they were tribal and peasant communities. There is reference to the capture of rich men and rich women, men brewers and women brewers, maibas and maibis (shaman, both male and female), Pheidas (eunuchs) who were employed in royal chambers in the text. Goldsmith, cowherds, fishermen, are also referred to.

When Chingurembi came to his kingdom she was accompanied by several attendants. Personal attendants were Lakhi Naral (Lakshmi Narayan) Ram Naral (Ram Narayan), Lokhoin Tas (Lokhon Das). Others were Tulsi Ram, elephant rider, Tulsi Ram, Dyer and garment maker, Hari, the gold smith, Hari Nara (Hari Narayan), the groom, Tapa, keeper of heath, Akhul Tao, a cowherd, Kathra, fisherman. The attendants were mostly Hindus except the last three. W.I. Singh thinks they were Tibeto-Burman Mayangs. She was called Chingurembi, a hyperbole as graceful as the goddess. According to the same scholar, Chingurembi was a Bengal Princess whose principality was at Lammangdong at the time of marriage which the Poireis took as Mayang principality and she was a daughter of a Sena princess of the Senas of Bengal."⁶⁹

State of Meitei Civilisation during Naothingkhong's time

Chronology has been the weakest part of the history of Manipur before Loyamba. But Pemberton's *Shan chronicle* depicting a very underdeveloped state of life among the Meiteis with Samlung, a Shan invader being the civilizer of the Meiteis, naturally draws attention of any conscientious student of history whether such a way of life is corroborated by the account found in the historical texts of Manipur, specially, Naothingkhong Phambal, Ningthourol Lambuba and others. An attempt is made to give a brief picture of the life and society of the Meities in Manipur valley during the reign of this king.

Society

The Meiteis were divided into clans and lineages. The existence of the clans, Ningthouja (Meities), Angom (Shelloi-Langmais), Khumans, Luwang, Moirang and Khaba was recorded. Such tribes like, Heirem Khunjan, Mangang, Maram, Kabui, Tangkhul, Chairen (Chakpa) were also mentioned. There was no mention of Chenglei and Sarang Leishangthem or Nganba. Perhaps they had ceased to be political group. The Chengleis had already lost their political autonomy.

Form of Marriage

The kings and princes practised polygamy. The custom of matrilocal residence (stay in wife's parental home) was prevalent. Marriage through love and elopement (Naothingkhong and Pitanga), engagement (Naothingkhong and Khuman princess) was found. The women played very important decisive roles in the career of their husbands or their daughters. Pitanga facing all danger saved the life of her husband. Nongjingsu after the death of her husband, king Ura Konthouba was responsible for the coronation of Naothingkhong. When Naothingkhong repented after the death of his first wife, he deified her and ordered the worship of Pitanga as Yunjao Leima as an ancestral deity of the royal household.

Education

It is for the first time that the education system of ancient Manipur is depicted in a historical text. Naothingkhong was a truant runaway

prince who took shelter among the Shelloi Langmai tribe of the Nongmaiching hill. He did not get the benefit of observation and participation in state craft under the supervision of his father. Though he grew up fully trained in physical and military art, his father-in-law, the Khuman chief thought it proper to send him to the great scholar chief of the Luwang, Hongnem Luwang Ningthou Punshiba who was supposed to have a long life, (he survived twelve generations). Naothingkhong was given instruction in tradition, history, moral code, rites and rituals connected with royalty. One is tempted to quote from the text, To begin with the Luwang Ningthou said, "this is a history of Korou Awangbi who with her brother laid a trap for a flying horse, Samden Ayangba and thus caught it, sinewy wings were clipped, Pongnu Poulo, a body of moral lessons meant for the young; there is Ougri, a narrative verse commemorating the creation value, Hanggen Kolo for the welfare of the people, the jolly verse of Khencho Langmei describing the origin of mankind and also other important stories relating to the formation of earth in the vast Meitei. All these without observations, will I impart to you and you have to listen attentively"⁷⁰.

Food and Dress

Contrary to what had been recorded in Pemberton's Shan chronicle, the Meiteis had already developed the art of spinning, weaving and dyeing. The coronation costumes of Naothingkhong which was known as Naothingkhong Phijet was a very elaborate set of royal costumes. He innovated coronation costumes such as Leiruthak (a head dress), Chareiningkham (a triangular piece of cloth with a brocade hanging on the back from the waist), Phirel Phurit (a long and loose shirt) for the king and Leiren Leichao (ornament of the hair), Kunshang Phanek (a skirt dark in colour) Kabrang Phanek (a cloth made of silk) for the queen.⁷¹ Even for the commoners, Pitanga presented a turban to Naothingkhong. The dress of the people appears to be simple. The staple food was rice, vegetables like arum roots, meat of animal hunted and domesticated and ginger. The wine making was wide spread among the Thanga Kambong, wine brewery was managed both by male and female. Rice, beer and wine were other items of food even for the king and nobles. Ginger is referred to in several places of the ornaments. Mention may be made of jewellery made of gold and

silver. The earlobes of Naothingkhong were bored by goldsmith and earrings of gold were put on.

Disposal of the Dead

There are the references to the death of Hongnem Luwang Ningthou Punshiba, the Luwang chief, a princess, a daughter of Naothingkhong and Urakonhouba. Elaborate rituals were performed for the burial of the dead in coffin. The text gives a fairly detailed formal rites. Headhunting was practiced by the Meiteis of the time. Fine arts, dance, music, dress, ornaments and garments were fairly developed and they were included in the coronation costumes. There are references to bamboo and tree consecration performed by the Moirang and Luwangs respectively. Tree and bamboo worship was also in vogue.

Economy

Naothingkhong Phambal Kaba gives a better economic condition of the people than Pemberton's Shan chronicles account that the people were poverty stricken and wretched that the Shan invader Shamlung did not impose any tribute over them, rather they were asked by him to be more civilised in their personal food habit, dress and behaviour. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people. The kingdoms of Ningthouja, Khuman and Luwang were devoted to wet rice cultivation whereas the Shelloi-Langmais as they were hill dwellers, took to shifting cultivation. Ningthourol Lambuba refers to the plentiful harvest of paddy in some hills that the owners could not carry their paddy to the barns in the village. The use of the basket known as Sangbai as measure for paddy was also mentioned. The king was strict about the paddy seedlings. A slave was killed by tying him in pole under water for spoiling paddy seedlings kept at the crown land which was tilled by the slaves. The agricultural technology was not mentioned. But the people were already husking the paddy by use of mortar and stick.

Other economic activity was fishing. The fishing weir made of reeds was described both in the chronicle and in the text. Weaving with spinning of cotton yarn and silk was done by the women folk. Hunting was another past-time with economic and material value. Animal husbandry was also developed: Goat rearing, rearings of cattle, buffaloes, pig, dogs and horses are given prominent references. Poultry like, chicken and duck is also maintained.

Use of Metal

Use of metal was also mentioned. There was a reference to a bridge over the Naga stream constructed with tin (Kokngou) and copper. Iron, gold and silver were also used. The construction of the royal dwelling house was made of wood, bamboo, cane and thatch. The trees and forests provided livelihood to the people. In describing the dense forest of Nongmaiching hill the author said that it was so dense that the collectors of herbs and minor forest products could not penetrate the forest of the Nongmaiching hill.

Political Life

The Ningthouja hegemony was accepted by other clan principalities which still maintained thier autonomy. The form of government was kingship among the Ningthouja, Khuman and Moirang. But among the Lurwang, it had become a chief of villages inhabited by the clan. The Shelloi Langmais were in a state of village political organisation. The king as a divinity was not very much projected. Naothingkhong was projected as truant prince like any other delinquent child of his age. There was a close political relation between the clan principalities.

The coronation ceremony of Naothingkhong is well depicted with great elaboration. The text records, "After the lapse of five days a purification ceremony took place. Water from seven different rivers were fetched in which tairen leaves and five bunches of raw ginger were dipped. The prince was then seated on fifteen leaves and had ablutions with the sanctified water. He was made to put on a turban, and perform a solemn rite (Chup saba which was performed to absolve any evil affect and prevent recurrence of any tragedy and incident) to stall recurrence of the visitation of accidents and foil disease that caused suffering to his ancestor. With the offering of a live cock, a variety of sacred plants and chanting of hymns by the priests the programme was completed.

"As enjoined by traditional custom the queen mother left the royal abode and moved in the local residence of her parent for a few days. Therefore, wearing immediately white clothes, she offered prayers to the ancestral deity for the welfare of the king designate".

"Inside the palace, the prince put on the ceremonial attire, adorned himself with the prescribed items of flowers and jewellery, mounted well bred horse. Trotting up to the middle of the courtyard, he

displayed his martial skill in swordsmanship. When the nobility and other gentry thronged there, the Maibas and Maibis (Shamans) carried out the ceremonial part of lying plantain leaves on the ground, after which the crowd slowly inched its way towards the palatial gate and reached by the side of Eeyon Khong. Those select attendants waiting upon him watched his face, hands and feet as a part of the ceremonial proceedings. A mat of split reeds was spread out for the prince to sit on and another to gungle over. On another mat were placed five earthen vessels filled with ground rice and drinking bowls fixed with stands. Another mat of clothes was fetched from Kei Kou Sallung Sang, and a he-goat was dragged near it over which the crown prince made a wide stride. He then gently made his way towards Kuchu (King's court) near Nungoibi, performed the act of Kyang Laan Hoiba and at a little distance a trained picked drummer sounded thunderous martial beats. The officer in charge of the royal wine cellar, raised a long drawn cry at the pitch of his voice"⁷²

The military system was well organised; a cavalry and foot soldiers and a small riverian navy were the arms of the military forces. The weapons were sword, spear and shield. The battle between Ningthouja and other tribes like Mangang, Thanga-Kambong and Shelloi-Langmais were contest between unequal enemies. Lallup had been in a rudimentary form. The kingdom was well administered by Ura Konthouba and Naothingkhong. Ura Konthouba is supposed to issue a currency. However, the reign of 100 years (663 to 763 A.D.) assigned to Naothingkhong by the royal chronicle can hardly be relied on. W.I. Singh assigns 25 years reign (1125-50 A.D.) to Naothingkhong.

Khongtekcha

Khongtekcha succeeded Naothingkhong who left behind a stable and prosperous country. It has been opined that Khongtakcha was probably born of Chingurembu a princess from the Mayang principality of Lamangdong"⁷³ and he ascended the throne at a very young age. "No one amongst his half brothers raised their heads. Khongtekcha could gain the throne not by his physical strength but with the help of his supporters. He was already supported by his late father, by the nobles and the people of Lamangdong principality. It is more likely that Khongtekcha shifted his capital after reigning for sometime in the area of upper Iril valley from the fear of coup by his half brother"⁷⁴ We are not given any source for this remarkable hypothesis. Another historian

writes, "the reign of Khongtekcha is important, because it shows the rise of Vaisnavism in the hill girt state lying between Burma and major part of India. The rise was slow as it was bound to be out it was rising steadily. Some centuries later it became the state religion of Manipur".⁷⁵ His observation was based on the Phayeng copper plate of king Khongtekcha. Both the scholars were inclined to think that the reign of Khongtekcha was important due to either his mother's connection with Lamangdong principality of the Bengal immigrants or his acceptance of Hinduism. Neither Cheitharol Kumbaba nor Ningthourol Lambuba gives any Hindu connection of Khongtekcha. His reign of ten years was extremely brief. Only Shakok Lamlen adds a myth that Khongtekcha was an incarnate of Sanamahi, the Meitei god. Perhaps he ascended the throne at a very young age. He married a Luwang girl. The chronicles record that 63 nobles of Moirang invaded the Meitei kingdom and were defeated. Ningthourol Lambuba refers to the invasion of the Keges (Moirang) and killing of 763 Kege nobles.⁷⁶ This chronicle refers to one Oinu Shengba Racha who was defeated by Khongtekcha. Therefore, Khongtekcha was described as the captor of Oinu Sengbaracha. W.I. Singh thinks that he (Oinu Sengbaracha) was a Moirang chief Oinu Seng Raja. The Moirangs were thus defeated by him.

One chronicle also refers to a royal hunting excursion with sixty nobles named Phamdous who were the customary representatives of the people at the royal court. All of them except one were drowned. One who survived the tragedy was holding a spike called Long and his descendants were known as Longjam lineage. Khongtekcha was a very skillful hunter. He is said to have devoted to the meditation on God and soul. He became deeply religious young king.

Phayeng Copper Plate of the King Khongtekcha

W. Yumjao Singh discovered a copper plate from the Chakpa village of Phayeng which was issued by king Khongtekcha Yoiremba and published this inscription in his "Report on the Archaeological Studies in Manipur, Bulletin No. 1 in 1935. This was an inscription dealing with religious beliefs, rites and rituals for the worship of Shiva and Devi. Many writers have given a lot of importance to the inscription for the study of the history of language, scripts, literature, religion and cultural and social development of the Meiteis. Many scholars think that it is the oldest Meitei script written inscribed inscription. It is the

earliest documentary evidence of the Meitei script and coming of Hinduism in Manipur.⁷⁷ A critical analysis of the inscription was made by Gangmumei Kabui⁷⁸ in 1969 in a note on the plates. S.K. Chatterjee also expressed his opinion on the copper plate as "problematic"^{78A} W.Yumjao Singh, discoverer of the inscription doubted its authenticity.

This inscription deals with the worship of Siva and Devi by king Khongtekcha and the formula for attainment of salvation. If the inscription is authentic, its importance is really great and we may agree with R.K. Jhalajit Singh who writes, "A change in the religious belief is discernable in the copper plates inscription. A close examination of the inscription reveals that he regarded Hari as the supreme deity. He believed that supremely pious souls, on going to heaven attained the feet to Shiva and Devi and thereafter became devotees of Hari, afterwards they were not be born again in the world.

"The inscription leaves no room to doubt that the king was familiar with these concepts; cycle of birth and death, incarnation of gods, life beyond death. Hindu deities mentioned in the inscription are Shiva, Devi, Ganesh, Viswakarma and Hari... The inscription makes it clear that worship of Hindu gods and goddesses with flower, uncooked rice, sesamum, milk, incense and lamp were familiar to Manipuri of the eight century."

"...The copper plate throws light on many points. It shows that the Manipuris of those days were familiar with the gods and goddesses (who are puranic deities). The copper plate shows that the contact with the rest of India was continued in the 8th century also. Preachers of Brahmanical religion must have been arriving in Manipur from time to time. The deities, being puranic gods as distinguished from the Vedic deities came into prominence in the Gangetic plains in the 4th century A.D."⁷⁹

However, Gangmumei Kabui's critical examination raises a number of questions which have to be properly answered before one accepts the authenticity of these plates. His view is in line with that of W.Yumjao Singh, the discoverer of the plate himself.

Chronology

Gangmumei Kabui writes, "Let us first examine the chronology of the inscription which was given as 721 years. It is claimed to be the oldest dated inscription using the Manipuri or Meitei script. According to

W.Yumjao Singh this is Saka Era. It establishes the antiquity of the Meitei script upto the eight century A.D. on archaeological evidences. It also confirms the use of Saka Era in Manipur at the time of its issuance. The Cheitharol Kumbaba has referred to the establishment of Saka Era 45 years after the accession of King Pakhangba. It is not clearly understood how the Saka Era was introduced in Manipur inspite of the prevalence of Kangleipak Era or Chandrabda. It is most likely that the Saka Era was gradually incorporated in the royal chronicle during the reign of Bhagyachandra Singh (1762-94) when Manipur was gradually brought into the cultural map of India. What can be deduced is that when the plates were issued, the kings of Manipur had been converted into Hinduism and the Saka Era was officially used in Manipur. However, there is a difference in the number of regnal years of Khongtekcha between the inscription and the Cheitharol Kumbaba. The chronicle gives the period for 763-773 A.D. as his regnal years and the year 799 A.D. (Saka Era) was the last year of Keirensa (784-799 A.D.) and the first year of the reign of Yaraba (799-821 A.D.). There is a difference of 26 years between the epigraphic date and the date of the chronicle. And the use of Saka Era by a king of the eight century cannot be easily explained.

Religion

A perusal of the text of the epigraph clearly shows that it is essentially a document dealing with religion and religious worship. King Khongtekcha according to this record, was a worshipper of Shiva and he acquired it after worshipping Him. The plates were buried and it was predicted that they would be discovered by a king who was a devotee of Shiva and Devi. Yet it also mentions "Hari" as the God invoked to provide protection to the king. There are references to 363 gods and 89 kings. According to Yumjao Singh himself, the inscription was of a religious transition peirod. It must have been written in a period of religious transitional period. It must have been written during a period when there were religious moves for the introduction of Saivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism. If the inscription has any grain of truth, in the eighth century, the worship of Shiva and Durga (Shakta-Hinduism) was practised in Manipur. Historically speaking the organised form of the Mother Goddess and the Male God in form of Devi and Mahadeva or Shiva came very late to Manipur, there was the system of Phallic worship as found in Hiyangthang Devi temple and

Ingourok Mahadeva and a host of temples and worshipping places scattered all over Manipur. Later Brahmanical scholars created intelligent mythological stories in which Mahadeva was almost converted to be the god who made human habitation possible in Manipur valley by drawing out the water through the hole made by his trident. No doubt there are gods and goddesses like Panthoibi, Nongpok Ningthou who were identified as incarnates of Shiva and Parvati. It is however, doubtful if the concept of Shiva, Devi and Hari (Vishnu) had been so well perfectly understood in the 8th century Manipur. It appears that the author of the inscription, wanted to popularise the cult of Shiva and Devi. The mention of Hari as the supreme god is meaningful. The mention of 363 gods cannot be easily explained because the Hindu pantheon includes innumerable number of deities. However, a conjecture can be made that they may be 363 Umanglais as mentioned by T.C. Hodson. There are more than 400 Umanglais in Manipur. Ganesha finds a place in the inscription. There is a reference to 89 kings (or chiefs) who would pay reverence to the reigning king who would discover the copper plates at a future time.

Authourship

King Khongtekcha is represented to be author of the copper plates but circumstances do not warrant such a conclusion. W. Yumjao Singh himself doubted the authenticity of these plates. He writes, "the manuscripts profess to have been of the time of king Khongtekcha of the 8th century A.D. but from the shape of the letters used as well as its languages it connotes inspite of the fact that in it there is a passage to show that the book was buried under the ground by that king to be taken out by some fortunate person afterward positively". He asserted that the plates would not be older than a century. But several scholars on the language, history and culture of Manipur have referred to the importance of the inscription in their respective fields of study. But one cannot but point out the following facts about the inscription.

(i) The language adopted is not so archaic as to be of the 8th century A.D. Sanskrit words, apart from the names of gods and goddesses, like Rasayana, Dharma, Purana, Puspa Mahamanik etc. are used. It is doubtful if such Sanskrit or other Indian languages were used at such an early period.

(ii) The Cheitharol Kumbaba does not corroborate the regnal years of king Khongtekcha given in inscription. The scribes must have

wrongly counted the regnal period of the king, as both the inscription and the chronicle were later works.

(iii) Mention of Hari implies worship of Vishnu and prevalence of Vaishnavism in the 8th century.

The king of Manipur did not embrace Vaishnavism nor accepted Hinduism before the eighteenth century. True, the worship of Vishnu by some individuals or immigrant Indian communities might have been from the fifteenth century onward or even earlier with the immigration of Brahmins and other Indian Hindu communities to Manipur. Worship of Shiva, Devi, Ganesh, did not exist in the Hindu form in a period as early as that of the 8th century. Definitely worship of Vishwa Karma was not known at that time.

Still, if authenticity of the plates could be established, it is an important source of information for the religious history of Manipur.^{79A} According to Cheitharol Kumbaba, Khongtekcha had a very short reign of ten years (763-773 A.D.). The religious changes that were projected in the Phayeng plates would not have been possible.^{79B} At the time of Khongtekcha, his children were probably very young and there was an interregnum of eleven years between him and his successor Kairencha indicating either political anarchy or the rule of the nobles or ministers (Ningthou Pongba) acting as regent during the minority of the prince.

Successors of Khongtekcha: Kairencha and Yaraba

According to the royal chronicles, the ruler who succeeded Khongtekcha was Kairencha who ascended the throne after an interregnum of eleven years after the death of Khongtekcha. The chronicles do not indicate any clear cut relation between Khongtekcha and Kairencha. The geneology of the Ningthouja clan describes him as the son and successor of Khongtekcha Kairencha who married Loichangambi daughter of Heinomba of Arambam lineage of Luwang clan. Her father appears to be a chief of the Luwang people, as he conquered the villages in Haokap range in western hills; and tributes were collected from them. He was succeeded by Yaraba, after a reign of fifteen years according to Cheitharol Kumbaba (784-99 A.D.) While R.K Jhalajit thinks that Yaraba was a son of Kairen, W.I. Singh opines that he was his brother. But no significant event was recorded in the chronicles. Ningthourol Lambuba describes Yaraba as shy and polite king but a skilled archer.⁸⁰

Ayangba

Ayangba succeeded Yaraba according to Cheitharol Kumbaba in 821 A.D. and had a reign of eighty nine years till 910 A.D. which is simply incredible. W.I. Singh proposes a reign of three years only 1278-1281 A.D. According to Ningthourol Lambuba his earlier name was Sarichongba. He was given the new name of Ayangba when he quickly defeated the Khumans in Thoubal region. He constructed a road in the eastern side of the capital which is even today known as Ayangpalli (the road of Ayang(ba)). He married a girl from Tairenjam lineage who was well known for her cool demeanor and disposition.

Ningthourol Lambuba records several skirmishes between Ayangba and the Khumans of Thoubal. This leads R.K. Jhalajit Singh to observe, "The reign of Ayangba is important as it marked the beginning of conflicts between the Ningthouja and the Khumans. The conflict went on for some three centuries and as the ultimate result, the principality of the Khuman was absorbed in the Ningthouja Kingdom. In the time of Ayanga, however, it was just the beginning of the conflicts.

"One day some subjects of Ayangba went for hunting. The animal escaped into Khuman territory. The Khumans took it very seriously and regarded it as a violation of their territory. A battle between the king and Khumans ensued. The Khumans were defeated and four persons were brought as prisoners"⁸¹. The battle was fought at Thoubal Moichaching.

Ayangba was succeeded by four rulers namely, Ningthoucheng, Chenglei Ipan Langthaba, Yarou Keiphaba and Irengba. Ningthoucheng who according to Cheitharol Kumbaba had a reign of thirty nine years (910-49) was a not able ruler. His reign was not doubt peaceful. He married a Khuman girl named Lambasu. It is said that he attacked the village of Haogei and brought numerous cattles and pigs. This was a small village now existing to the west of Imphal at a distance of about seven miles.⁸²

Chenglei Ipan Lanthaba was the successor of Ningthoucheng. During his reign, the Ningthouja defeated the Luwangs on the Luwang yi stream in the west of Imphal. They were made prisoners. According to W. Yumjao Singh, the name of the king itself means "one who sent soldiers on the bank of the river of Chenglei that is on the Luwang li which is the modern home of Luwang"⁸³. This big river is now reduced to a small nalla. Since this attack, the Luwangs were brought under

subjugation of the Ningthoujas. Cheitharol Kumbaba gives 20 years reign for the king (949-69 A.D.)

Keiphaba was the son and successor of Chenglei Ipan Lanthanba. Keiphaba (one who caught tiger) was earlier named as Khamlang Atonba. He is credited to have caught or hunted 6 tigers while his men caught 2 tigers⁸⁴. During his reign embroidery on women's Phanek Phiban was introduced. A tiger was caught at Langthabal.⁸⁵ He had a short reign of 15 years. (969-84 A.D.)

Irengba

He was succeeded by his eldest son Irengba whose earlier name was Keital Thaba. During his reign the Moirangs were invaded by an expeditionary force of the Ningthoujas. A battle was fought at Ithai Panam Ching. The Moirangs were defeated and ten prisoners were taken, Kege Moirang Khamba, Haorok Khamba, Sendang Khamba, Larak etc.⁸⁶ Irengba also defeated the Khumans at Taknakha.

Irengba was meticulous about royal garments and costumes. He put on Ningkham Phi, inner garments, shirts, shawls, bangles and earrings made of gold. The court poet describes that he was small physically but mentally very high. He devoted his time to learning.⁸⁷

He married Tambeibi, the daughter of Khuman Chief, Nongyai Tengolhanba. This Khuman chief was a prosperous and powerful ruler with large number of cattle and big stories of paddy. He defeated the Pangals led by Kala Raja on the Khuga river.

After the death of Irengba, his queen wanted to make a statue of the king. She engaged one wood carver named Kabui Haochong Nongmucha to carve a wooden statue of the king. The artisan carved the wooden statute out of soft wood and it was painted with yellow turmeric pigment. The young women mourners did not feel like weeping after looking at the statue which did not resemble the king. The queen commissioned another brazier, Adon Khurisuba to cast the statue. The artisan tried to collect wax but failed to collect enough quantity of wax to make a model. On the approval of queen a statue of copper was cast. The statue looked like the king and it was very much adored by everybody.⁸⁸

Irengba was supposed to have reigned for 90 years according to Cheitharol Kambaba (984-1074 A.D.). This would not be acceptable to any critical student of the history. But after Irengba, the Cheitharol Kumbaba gives a fairly reasonable chronology from the reign of

Loiyamba. According to the scheme of chronology adopted in this work, the chronology of the Ningthouja kings since Loiyamba as found in Cheitharol Kumbaba will be followed from the reign of Loiyamba in the later part of 11th century A.D.

Loiyamba, the Great Law Giver

Loiyamba's reign was an important period in the history of Manipur. With the accession of Loiyamba to the throne of Ningthouja kingdom we have again enough historical evidences to reconstruct the history of Manipur in the beginning of twelfth century. Apart from the chronicle, we have the royal edict after the name of the king, the Loiyamba Shilyen which is an important historical document for the reconstruction of the social and economic history of Manipur of the period. After the reign of Naothingkhong, we come accross the documents which are reliable and trustworthy source. We are adopting the chronology given in the Cheitharol Kumbaba in tracing the course of history of Manipur. Loiyamba succeeded Irengba in 1094 A.D.

Consolidation of Kingdom

Perhaps during the mild and peaceful reign of Irengba the control of Meitei state over the hill tribes which were once tributary was greatly relaxed. Thus in the beginning of his reign Loiyamba was engaged in a number of expeditions. He sent his brother-in-law Angouba Haokhei Lanthaba to invade Sekta which refused to give a stool with magical power and asked him not to return till he defeated the six villages of Sekta inhabited by the Chakpa. He captured several Chakpa warriors whose names are recorded in the chronicles: Chakpa Tao, Angkom Tao, Akem Taoba, Haonutei Kwakpi.

He deputed his half brother Khamlang Pansaba to conquer the tribal villages of Haoku which refused to pay tribute to the king. The Haoku chief was defeated and Pansaba captured some warriors.

The Malloi village insulted an official called Leithou Lambu, a controller of Leihou who was deputed to collect the tribute from the Malloi tribal village. The chief of Malloi taunted that he could not be given food and drink and no tribute could be given. He even challenged king Loiyamba that he would be too weak to climb up the mountain. When the king heard this news, he attacked the Leihou and Malloi villages which were completely defeated. Then chiefs Haothang

Haoyen of Malloi and Khomung of Leihou were also captured. The Ningthourol Lambuba records this incident and one can gather that the tributes consisted of wine, arum root, cloth, dog, chicken and wooden seats. Loiyamba displayed such courage and valour that one of his titles was conqueror of Haothang Haoyen.

While returning, Loiyamba raided Thangdapung and defeated a group of dark people who were described in the chronicle as monkey-looking people who were supposed to possess precious stones with magical power. W.I. Singh thinks that "dark monkey looking people might be of Funan origin".

While conquering these various hill tribes, Loiyamba started the practice of singing Ougri, a verse of praising the valour, duties and responsibilities which are normally recited by the priests in the ears of the king. The open singing of Ougri was to ensure the "permanent destruction of the place where it was sung. Dancing a rhythmic dance in a circle, they sang a tuneful song. But the effect according to the belief was that the place would remain ruined, if not forever, at least for a great length of time. The Manipuris occupied the territories of their arch enemies, they sometime sang the charmed song. The practice continued upto the middle of the nineteenth century".⁸⁹

During the reign of Loiyamba, according to R.K.Jhalajit Singh, "the domain of the Ningthouja kings included many of the hills now situated within the present boundaries of Manipur".⁹⁰ But the evidences do not corroborate this assertion. But some hill chiefs near the valley were made tributary to the Meitei ruler. However, one is not inclined to accept the view that Loiyamba was the unifier of the hills and valley of Manipur.

Administrative Reforms: Pana System

Along with the military consolidation of the kingdom Loiyamba introduced administrative reforms which provided the steel frame of the administration of the kingdom for about seven centuries. He systematized the administrative divisions of the country by creating six lups (division). Khongchalup, Nongmailup, Angoubalup, Leichol Lakpa Tolong Khombalup, Khurailup, Lipp hambamlup and Khangjenglup.⁹⁰ The six lups were perhaps the basis for the development of the Pana system at a later historical period. But we do not find any source to indicate that Loiyamba introduced the Pana system. However, history refers to Ahallup, Naharup, Khabam and

Potsangba Panas which are supposed to have been introduced by Pakhangba. It was a later interpolation in the work by some scholars (we will discuss the Pana system at a later stage).

Lallup System

It is for the first time that Cheitharol Kumbaba refers to Lallup system in Manipur. It records that gods and men attended the Lallup together and gods had disappeared and men had emerged victorious.⁹¹ The editors of the chronicle in the foot note interpreted this allegorical reference as the victory of the western civilisation and disappearance of the eastern civilisation. This interpretation is not convincing. W.I. Singh in his very characteristic style interprets this at the absorption of Lai (literal meaning "God") tribe or community by the Poirei or Meitei.

Our historical interest lies in the reference to "Lallup" which was a feudal service rendered by the subjects to the king or the state. Lallup covered all state works-both military and development maintenance. Lallup literally means war organisation (lal = war, lup = organisation). Therefore, originally it was a military service which was extended to other non-military or economic activities of the state.

This development of Lallup system was the manifestation of emergence of feudalism in the social, administrative and political structure of the Meitei kingdom. The Lallup was better administered through the administrative and social divisions. Loiyamba's introduction of the six administrative units called Lup was a significant contribution to the strengthening of the working of the feudal service system of Lallup. The Lallup system was in existence in the centuries preceeding Loiyamba's rule. The feudalisation of handicrafts and industries and king's control over the economic occupations of the artisan families is clearly embodied in the royal decree issued by the king himself at the later parts of his reign.

Loiyamba Shinyen is a royal edict on the social distribution of economic and administrative functions proclaimed by king Loiyamba.⁹² It is an important historical document for the reconstruction of the social and economic history of Manipur. The decree was issued by Loiyamba in 1110 A.D. The edict was based on the earlier codes and conventions current during the previous reigns as there are references to them in the text. Finding that the kingdom comprised major portion of the valley and some portions of the hill tribes, Loiyamba tried to divide

the population according to occupation; and one occupation was assigned to one family.

Gangmumei Kabui writes, "The decree of Loiyamba deals with the distribution of occupation according to Yumnak (families) assignment of duties to priest and priestess (Maibas + Maibis = Shamans), assignment of the works of maintenance of the abode of deities (Umanglais), to selected families, creation of administrative departments (Loishangs), duties and functions of kings and queens, royal etiquette, titles and decorations awarded to the nobles, administration of justice, keeping of standard time and many other things."⁹³ This decree with later modifications may be regarded as the written constitution of Manipur.⁹⁴

Distribution of Economic Occupation

Handicrafts had greatly developed during the period and the people were traditional weavers. The king divided the weavers and dyers into two categories. 30 families were assigned to weave different designs of clothes. It is very revealing that in the 12th century Manipuri weavers developed such a rich variety of weaving designs which were patented with the state. There were as many as 32 designs of clothes Mung Phi, Chin Phi, Lai Phi, Wana Kadeng Phi, Lai Phi Tangkap, Phirel, Langdon Phi, Yarongphi, Chamiphi, Tongkapphi, Sarongphi, Leirumph, Dollaikupphi, Dolaithanaphi, Muiroiphi, Heikoiphi, Senkanphi, Laiyekphi, Purumph, Phaganngphi, Taraopphi, Pumthitphi, Phimuzekepangyumphi, Nongphi, Khunungmushiphi, Khunu Chunkhanphi, Chingkhongphi, Phimmu, Phinin Lanphi, Khunungmathangphi, Karouphi Phingang, Shangnu Langnuphi, Khangang Ningthoupbi.⁹⁵ 30 families were assigned to weave these clothes. Some of these designs were based on the clothes of the tribes, Tarao and Purum etc.

The dyers were assigned to produce different colours based on colour of flowers. Eight families were assigned to dye in respective colours. The number of families engaged in weaving were greater than that of dyers.

Maintenance of Abodes of Detties

Forty five families were assigned to look after fortyfive abodes of deities (Umanglais) which were scattered all over the kingdom. The

edict records the name of forty deities worshipped by the Meiteis in the twelfth century A.D. (Loiyamba, Meireima, Khamlangba, Washoi, Yeikai, Soraren, Wangkhai, Lammebi, Phouoibi, Sanglangmei, Kuchu, Puroi, Leima, Mawao Leima, Panthoibi, Petanga, Heitol Leima, Laikhulembi, Humureima, Leinaotabi, Nongthellemma, Shounon, Awangba Luwangching, Leiyeng Thouthanbi, Puthiba, Pureiromba, Tellingba, Thonga, Chingkil Ningthou, Chingbal Leima, Yaoreibi, Koubarel, Chakhrapa, Numitleima, Koupru, Moiranghacklei Ariba, Hongmem Yoi Khujaoba, Chinga, Langching, Langol, Longmaiching, Chingaleima, Heipok, Laiching, Hiyangthang).⁹⁶ A brief glance into the names of the deities shows that both mythical and historical personalities including kings and queens had started to be worshipped as gods and goddesses. Thus the ancestor worship had fully developed during the Loiyamba's time. Further it refers to a few artisan families like Aheibam who was to cast bronze vessels like gong etc.

Duties of Maibas (Priest)

The Maibas of Manipur were actually Shamans and but they acted as priests and medicine men. Maibas of 101 families were assigned different duties of healing the sick, performing rites, offering sacrifices and preparation of birth and death ceremonies. The animal sacrifice of the period is referred to in the edict. Many main duties were assigned to a larger number of Maibas of many families to worship or perform rites for purification duties.

Departments (Loishangs)

The edict refers to the six guardian spirits who were the protectors of king: Mangang, Luwang and Khuman gurus, Thangching, Marjing and Thongarel. It further records that there were ten state officials who were assigned with the task of administering the land: namely Pukhramba, Nongthomba, Khwairakpa, Yaishullakpa, Hiyangloi, Chengkaopa, Halchapa, Yumangloi, Halchapa, Yamangloi Halchapa, Phamthathek, Naichummapakpa. These officials were given both administrative and religious duties.⁹⁷

The expanded edict deals with the duties of king, etiquette of the court, administrative duties of the different officials, royal customs, prizes and decorations to be awarded to the nobles, administration of justice and keeping of the standard time. Further details about the

duties of the queen, royal painters, procedures to be followed during the birth of the royal children are described. The feudal dues to be rendered by different tribes are also mentioned. It will be discussed in the regnal period of relevant rulers.

Loiyamba Shinyen has projected a well organised society and economy of Manipur. The agrarian economy was now supplemented by the growing handicraft and industry. It was so much developed that the state had to regulate the organisation of these industries. The emergence of the artisan class was a great landmark in the reign of Loiyamba. The edict has also indicated that the monarchy was fully entrenched and the king became very powerful. The people who were essentially peasants, had become artisans and started rendering feudal service of Lallup to the king. The nobles were greatly strengthened and a hierarchy of nobility was recorded. The paraphernalia of the court etiquette had become now elaborate. The priestly class was regulated by the king who had assumed not only political headship but had become the social and religious head and the controller of economy of the kingdom. However, this decree does not indicate the land tenural system of Loiyamba's time. But the additions in the edict during Mungyamba's and Khagemba's reign which would be discussed later have the evidence of feudal land tenural system. The inference made by some scholars that Loiyamba was a worshipper of Shiva⁹⁸ is not reflected in the edict as the king and people were the followers of the ancient Meitei cult.

Estimate of Loiyamba

Loiyamba has been described as one of the principal makers of Manipur. His decree on the reforms of the economic order of the Meitei society laid the foundation of the emerging feudal form which existed till the end of the nineteenth century. R.K. Jhalajit writes, "He was a great reformer. He definitely put an end to a social order prevalent before his time and ushered in a new one. Reformation is a difficult work specially for those who by nature lack tact or are overjealous. It is a great tribute to Loiyamba that his reforms were carried out with peace" He died in 1122 A.D. According to the same scholar the reign of Loiyamba marked the end of ancient period in the history of Manipur and the beginning of medieval period. But this periodisation lacks certain clarity; it neither fits into the periodisation of Indian history (the ancient period is upto the 12th century A.D.) nor

into the European or Asian history's periodisation. In our opinion, though Loiyamba's period is a very important landmark in the history of Manipur, the ancient period does not end with his reign. It continues upto the middle of the 15th century.

Loitongba (1112-50)

Loiyamba had two sons; Loitongba and Phisukong. His magnificent reign was succeeded by a comparatively unsuccessful but peaceful rule of his son Loitongba who succeeded him in 1122 A.D.⁹⁹ He sent a military expedition towards the east and captured several prisoners from Sinam-Sangkong. His reign of twentyeight years was marked by the development of peaceful cultural activities. He is reported to have introduced an indigenous game of Kaang Sanaba. W.Yumjao Singh writes, "It is an indoor game between two parties each consisting of seven persons either males alone or males and females mixed. It is played by propelling a flat substance originally the fruit of the creeper (known as Kaang). It is a very lively game, the players must accurately shoot the point to which he must steadfastly concentrate all his attention. Although it is an indoor game, still it requires a good deal of physical exercise and activity."¹⁰⁰

He died after twentyeight years of peaceful reign. He married Loinusu of Khuyenthem family.

Atom Yoiremba (1150-63)

Loitongba had three sons; Atom Yoiremba, Hemton Iwanthaba and Shanaba. He was succeeded by his eldest son named Atom Yoiremba. He reigned for thirteen years. But according to the editor of Ningthourol Lambuba, he was not coronated.¹⁰¹ The Cheitharol Kumbaba records that he was driven out by his brother, Hemton Iwanthaba who engineered a conspiracy with the help of some nobles of the court. Atom Yoiremba sought refuge in the Khuman country.¹⁰² Ningthourol Lambuba records the details of the conspiracy between the king's brother Hemton Iwanthaba with a Khuman noble named Nongthol Temai Thingba against the king. Perhaps due to his strong ambition or due to his differences with his brother, Hemton Iwanthaba (Loiyamba) used to hide at a number of places outside the Kangla Kingdom. During his sojourn in Khuman country, he met Hanu Narengsu, wife of the said Khuman noble. The lady asked the Meitei

prince to come to her house. The prince came to the noble's house and made friendship with the noble. The conspiracy was for the occupation of the Kangla and the coronation seat of the king. With the help of the Khuman noble and Hemton Iwanthaba occupied the coronation seat which was used since the time of Naophangba. When Atom Yoiremba heard about their rebellion, he told his followers that he would not fight his brother and there should not be two rulers. He decided to leave the king's kingdom for the Khuman country. He asked the ladies of the royal household whether they would like to accompany him to his self exile in the land of the Khuman. Ultimately Aton Yoiremba and his son Taoren Hanba sailed down in a boat to the Khuman country. He was met by the Khuman chief Aton Punsiba from whom the king sought refuge and shelter. The Khuman chief clarified that he was not involved in the conspiracy of Hemton Iwanthaba. Accordingly Aton Yoiremba settled among the Khumans. ¹⁰³

Iwanthaba (1163-95): Conflict with the Khuman

While Iwanthaba succeeded the throne with the help of a Khuman noble, he was perhaps not happy at the political asylum granted by the Khuman chief Aton Punshiba and his reign was a period of continuous conflicts with the Khuman. Soon after his accession, he invaded the Khuman country at Uchiwa village. ¹⁰⁴ The quarrel as recorded in Ningthourol Lambuba was started over the hunting right in the Khuman territory. Meijrao which was in the northern fringe of the Khuman territory was abundant in different kinds of deer including the famous brow antlered deer (Sangai). Iwanthaba went out for hunting deers in Meijrao and hit a deer by his spear. The deer escaped with the spear. The dead deer was recovered by some Khuman fishermen who presented the deer with the spear to the Khuman chief Aton Punshiba. The fisherman did not know the hunter who hunted the deer. And the Khuman chief used the deer and the spear for worship to the goddess of grain. Later on, he was told by a Khuman noble that the spear belonged to Hemton Iwanthaba as it was made and presented to him when he was an exile in Khuman country. The Khuman chief returned the spear to the Meitei king who was angry at the damage done to the spear and use of his hunted deer in the worship of the goddess of grains. He immediately ordered an invasion of the Khuman country at Uchiwa. The 'Spear' issue was a mere excuse for the Meitei aggression. He proceeded along the Imphal river by boat. He killed the queen of the

Khuman who was engaged in an agricultural work in her field. The king took away her head and returned toward his capital by boat. The Khumans followed him along the river banks and requested him to return the head of the Khuman queen, Hongnanga Ningolbi. But the king just left for his kingdom. Ultimately it was decided to meet in a duel at a place called Yaoron Tenupan after five days. The Khuman warriors arrived at the appointed place. The Ningthourol Lambuba records how the Khumans took omen whether the Meitei king Hemton Iwanthaba, the Angom chief Thangwai Liksingsu and the warriors would come to the duelling place. The Meitei king sent word that the Khuman noble, Nongthol Tengmai Thingba had died and he could not leave the capital till his funeral was over. He could come after five days.

Meanwhile, he directed his military officers Langmaithouba Lukok Wahengsu, Khamlang Asengkhaba, Ashenhanba and Angom chief Thangwai Liksingsucha to proceed along the tribal lambus (guides) to attack the Khuman from the south. Thus the king made a surprise attack on the Khumans who were taking food at the appointed place. Many Khuman warriors were killed including Tauren Khaba, the son of the former Meitei king Atom Yoiremba, the nephew of Thawanthaba. He kept the head of his nephew in a bundle hanging in a tree. Thirty prisoners were taken. The treachery of Hemton Iwanthaba paid the dividends in the defeat of the Khumans. But it was definitely a slur on the character of this king who turned out his brother from the throne, killed an unarmed queen of the Khuman whose hospitality he enjoyed during his bad days and committed treachery on the unsuspecting Khumans.

Iwanthaba married a Angom girl named Linburen Khuronganbi.¹⁰⁵ His reign according to Cheitharol Kumbaba was for 32 years.

Thawanthaba (1195-1231)

Thawanthaba was known earlier as Ayangba Sarichongba. The reign of Thawanthaba was a landmark in the history of Ningthouja dynasty. He had completely defeated the Khumans who accepted the subordinate status under the Meitei suzerainty. Paradoxically, despite the drubbing they received at the hands of Iwanthaba, the Khuman chief Aton Punshiba whose queen was killed by the Meitei King's father, invited Thawanthaba for a joint military expedition against the Heirem Khunjaus, an ethnic group in south west Manipur. The Heirem

Khunians were rival group of the Khumans. Whenever the Khumans made a drum, they made one. When they constructed a mound, they also raised one mound. They committed theft on the Khuman country and mocked them that the Khuman could not enter their villages. The joint forces of Meiteis and the Khumans proceeded by boats and defeated the Heirem Khunians. Several prisoners were taken in this campaign.¹⁰⁶

The friendship was short lived and soon another conflict arose between them over the issue of Thawanthaba's daughter princess Chingkhei Thanbi who was killed by the Khuman.¹⁰⁷ Thawanthaba invaded the Khuman country and defeated them. And many prisoners were captured. The defeat was very decisive one. Though the Khuman principality was not annexed; the Khuman power had been totally destroyed.¹⁰⁸

The chronicles refer to the frequent raids in many tribal villagers. Thawanthaba raided Chingsong village which was defeated and burnt down. One Leimu Yantak was brought as prisoner.¹⁰⁹ Chingsong was a Tangkhul village. He also attacked Koijing Koimabou in the south and captured its chief Thawa Langjeng Soi. From this incident, his name was changed from Ayangba Sarichongba to Thawanthaba.¹¹⁰ He also defeated Laubang. In the north, he fought against the Irong and captured Nura Nakhongsu, Naokhongchamba and Konthousu. In the western hills inhabited by the Kabui (Rongmei) tribe in the basin of Iyei river he invaded and captured twenty prisoners including Thongthappa, Phupamba, Phouoisang, Haobathikpa and the chief Huimongtaoba. Then he raided successfully the village of Langmeithet and a few prisoners were taken. He also invaded the Lonloi (a Loi group), Iyeiba, Amchi, Nonglaikon and Tangkhul Leihoupok. It is said, the king demanded as tributes fish from the Lonloi village. He made an expeditionary march to Loijing Phouoiching, Thangching Narengpok and defeated Phuramba Kadaupu. In the south, he invaded Ngasap Laikangyi. In the east, he defeated the Shelloi Langmais. He also invaded Thawa village which was burnt down. Kharoi Mende, the sister of Kaklen Thaniha, the chief of Thawa was captured. She was described as wearing an orchid (Melei). This is a very interesting incident concerning a stone carver (Nunghakpa) of Kaknouyai who refused to surrender to the king and a conflict ensued, in which he was defeated and captured by the king.

Thawanthaba was able to penetrate the hill areas inhabited by the various tribal groups surrounding the valley of Manipur. He was

rightly described as having kept his kingdom more unified. The Ningthourol Lambuba describes the intrigues and warfare during his reign.

Thawanthaba married Tönkaingambi, the daughter of the Angom noble Kankhang Laichauba. Thawanthaba had a long reign of 36 years and he died in 1231. He left behind a powerful kingdom. The Khumans were conquered but their territory was not annexed. Only Moirang remained outside the pale of the Ningthouja kingdom. Thawanthaba's reign was in a transition from the twelfth to the thirteenth century. R.K. Jhalajit Singh's proposal to describe Loiyamba's reign as the end of ancient period and beginning of the medieval period is not appropriate. Though the periodisation adopted in this work does not necessarily follow the Indian model of periodisation, if such a model is to be followed the reign of Thawanthaba is more appropriate to be described as the period of transition from ancient to medieval period.

Chingthanglanthaba (1231-43)

Thawanthaba was succeeded by his son Chingthanglanthaba. He fought against the Khumans who were defeated. He sent an expedition against a Loi group known as Lonloi. His earlier name was Kauba Miyamba. He defeated the Kabaw, a Shan group from the Chindwin river basin at a hill village known as Mapithen in Eastern hills. He extracted tribute of salt from them. He also raided the Shellois, Tamu village and the Chakpas whose chiefs were captured by him. His rule was not that eventful. He was succeeded by his son, Thingbaishilungba, who had a very short reign of five years (1242-47).

Puranthaba (1247-63)

Puranthaba ascended the throne of the Ningthouja kingdom in A.D. 1247 his reign marked the establishment of Ningthourol Lambuba, his earlier name was Poirei Ningthouhanba. Puranthaba sent his Khuman Lambu (an officer incharge of the Khuman affairs) named ~~Maifongser~~ ~~ramacha~~ Ateracha to the Khuman principality to enquire whether the Khuman chief Aton Punshiba was still alive.

The Khuman chief was very much annoyed and rightly he felt insulted. He informed that the Shelloi Langmai gave this information to the Meitei king. The Khuman chief in order to take revenge over the

Shelloi Langmai, invaded their country. The Shelloi Langmai in turn sought the help of the Meitei king who completely defeated the Khuman forces at Poirei. This was the last battle marking the Meitei conquest of Khuman principality. Since this event the Khumans were totally absorbed into the kingdom of Manipur.

Like his father, Puranthaba was quite active in the suppression of Chakpas of Moiching village and other villages along the Thoubal river. The reference made by James Johnstone in his *My experiences in Manipur and Naga hills* that a Chinese force invaded Manipur in A.D. 1250 is not collaborated by any source. The Chinese invasion was some centuries later.

Nandalal Sharma has opined that the name Puranthaba perhaps indicates the influence of Sanskritic culture and that the king must have supervised the writing of Puranas. However, we do not have evidence of the literary achievement of the reign of Puranthaba. The king died at a comparatively young age. Puranthaba's wife was an Angom girl named Ningthoupokpi.

Khumomba (1263-78) : Shan Invasion

After the death of Puranthaba, his younger brother Khumomba became the king in 1263. Khumomba's reign marks the beginning of the further extension of the Ningthouja kingdom to the east. The weakening of Khuman principality not only added to the power of the Ningthouja in Manipur valley but brought the kingdom into immediate hostile contact with Shan dwellers of Kabaw valley in Chindwin basin of Upper Burma. These group of Shan were known to Manipur as Kabaw which was both name of the people and their habitat. R.K. Jhalajit Singh rightly observes, "The Ningthouja kings had so far fought against the princes of other clans or the chief of the hill villages. From the time of Khumomba a new chapter is opened. From this time onward, they had to measure their arms against foreign people, foreign in the sense that these peoples came beyond the present boundary of India" ¹¹¹ The occasion for fighting the Kabaw — Shan was their invasion with seven divisions in Ikop Lake region of the Khuman principality. The Khumans were so weakened that they could not fight for their own survival. The Haokhas and Chairens were being threatened by the Shan invaders. They also threatened the Khunjans; a portion of Khuman territory was being handed over to the Taraos; a portion was brought under the Marings; another portion was proposed

to be the place for the raising of Stone megaliths of the Tangkhuls. At this critical juncture, the Khumans were defeated by the Shans and the Khumans sent for military help from the Meitei King.¹¹² The Shans were defeated by Meitei forces. The Chronicle records that like the swarms of bees of the month of Langban (September) the Shan invaders swooped down on the Khuman valley. The Meitei king made a strategy for defence and counter attack in consultation with military nobles; the Shan soldiers like the thunder from the sky rushed in with thunderous war cries. They shot arrows from their cross bows like the swarm of bees. Harukok of Nganba lineage was killed. In the file of the Poirei, the invaders were giving pressure; and the king with sword in his hand rode out in his horse and rushed towards the Shan invaders who were dispersed. The Shans were repulsed and several soldiers were captured as war prisoners. The Shans were defeated on the bank of Ikop lake.¹¹³ He married a girl from Khuman country. From the battle onwards the protection of the Khumans from external aggression had become the responsibility of the Meitei king.

Khumomba also raided the Thangal and Maram villages to the north and west of Manipur valley. He also defeated Chingsong village. He had a reign of 15 years.

Successors of Khumomba: Moiramba and Thangba Lanthaba

Khumomba was succeeded by his son Moiramba in A. D. 1278 there was a small skirmish between the king and the Khuman at Leitang and some Khumans were captured as prisoners. There was a recorded fight between the Meitei and Moirangs at Ningthoukong.¹¹⁴ Several persons were taken prisoners. Later on, he is said to have defeated a tribal village called Aibitok in the Maku (Makru?) river basin and their chief Haotrak and a warrior called Karirong were captured.¹¹⁵ The fight with the Moirang was significant that it was the reflection of growing aggressive nature of the Meitei state. Moiramba died in 1302.

Fight with the Moirangs

Son of Moiramba, Thangbi Lanthaba ascended the throne in A.D. 1302 which was given to this ruler for having conquered the Maring tribe who occupied the eastern hills overlooking the Kabaw valley. The fight with the Moirangs was continued during his reign. Thangbi

Lanthaba asked for the hand of Yoiren Tompokpi, daughter of Moirang king Chingphu Telheiba who refused to give his daughter in marriage to the Meitei king. But the princess secretly sent word to the Meitei king through messengers that she was willing to accept the proposal. A battle was fought at Loktak Lake. The Meitei soldiers tried to cross the big lake by boat and the Moirangs defended them at the lake itself. The Moirangs were defeated and Yoiren Tompokpi was married to Thangbi Lanthaba. She became chief queen. This battle over the Moirang princess indicated the growing power of the Ningthoujas. The result, of course, was a matrimonial relation between the two kingdoms.

Thangba-Lanthaba invaded the Maring hills and totally destroyed the Maring Khunbi village. He also invaded Sekkuching village in the Koubru hills. He had a reign of twenty years (A.D. 1302 - 24).

Kongyamba

Thangbi Lanthaba was succeeded by Kongyamba, a son by his second queen. His earlier name was Sana Ahongba. He defeated the tribals of Kongyang village in the western hills. Since the battle, his name was changed to Kongyamba (victor of Kongyang). He also raided Tendongyan, Ingenching (Hinglan ching) to the west of the kingdom.

His reign was marked by the invasion of his kingdom by a group of people from the west. Cheitharol Kumbaba describes them Mayang whereas Ningthourol Lambuba calls them Thongnang. The battle was fought at Ingenching (Hinglan ching). The invaders were defeated. The Meitei forces captured, according to Ningthourol Lambuba, one long haired Mayang name Aphe-Raja, Ting Raja the harsh speaker, Lakka Sumka Tao, Aring Ara Tau and 200 prisoners. These people appear to be group of Bengal refugees who were driven out of Bengal by the Muslims and who came to Manipur through the hill routes for shelter. He defeated the Chakpa Lammangdong, the place where Bengal immigrants had been settled by the king. Kongyangba had a short reign of eleven years. Telheiba son of Kongyamba (1335-55) reigned for twenty years. He was succeeded by his younger brother Tonaba. Tonaba defeated Heirem Khunjan, and Chairen in the south east. He fought against the Marems (Marams) in west. Tenaba had a very short of five years (1355-59). He was succeeded by Tabungba (1359-94) Tabungba continued to fight against the Marems. He invaded Chingsong village. But he was killed by the Chingsong chief Khamlangba. Tabungba was succeeded by his son Lairemba (1394-98)

who reigned five years. Lairemba died without any issue. His death was followed by an interregnum of five years.

Punshiba (1404-32)

Punshiba was the younger brother of Lairemba. He came into clashes with a large number of tribal villages in the surrounding hills, Moirang and Thanga Kambong in western part of Imphal valley. He invaded the villages inhabited by the Thanga Kambongs who were defeated and the Moirang chief Yakhusu was captured as a prisoner. After the defeat of the group in the valley, Punshiba turned towards the eastern hills. He defeated the Tangkhuls of Monthou and Kaihau villages. He also invaded the Maring hills. These military expeditions were aimed at the consolidation of the Ningthouja rule in the kingdom of Manipur. According to Cheitharol Kumbaba, his reign came to an end in 1432, perhaps he died, after a successful reign of 28 years. His reign showed the extension of the kingdom into interior tribal areas of the surrounding hills. His conflict with the Tangkhul was a significant development as the Tangkhuls raided the Meitei country several times. His wife was Yairumlon Lanbasu of the Angom. The Kingdom of the Ningthoujas had become greatly strengthened by the military exploits of the king.

Ningthou Khomba (1432-67) Conqueror of Tamu

The vigorous rule of Punshiba which was the trend setter of the subsequent periods of the history of Manipur in the fifteenth century was followed by more aggressive rule of Ningthoukhomba who was described as "a worthy son of a worthy father"¹¹⁶ He ascended the throne in A.D. 1432. His earlier name according to Ningthourol Lambuba was Charairongba. At the time of his accession, he was determined to expand the territorial limits of the kingdom by following a policy of aggressions and conquered of the neighbouring areas. True, during the reign of his father, the Ningthouja kingdom had covered most part of Manipur valley, north-western, north and north eastern hills. If the kingdom had to expand, it had to come with conflict with the principality in the southern Manipur valley, the Moirang country or the Shan principalities or villages in the east and in the western part of the Chindwin basin of Upper Burma. Both Cheitharol Kumbaba and Ningthourol Lambuba record the details of the military exploits of Ningthoukhomba.

Conflict with the Shans of Tamu

Ningthoukhomba's policy was to provoke both the Shan principality of Tamu and the Moirang principality into a political quarrel and the eventual military conflict would be taken advantage of by Ningthouja king of Meitei kingdom. Ningthoukhomba went in disguise to survey the south western region of Manipur which was abundant in wild animals including bears and passed through the village of Moirang Ngankhacha which was inhabited by Ayangba lineage. He kept a mistress, a Yimlembam girl who was also in search of the sword of Ningthoukhomba which was kept in hiding somewhere in Moirang village. He located one Khuman Laitonbi immigrant resident in Moirang named Amutarausu to send the official (Lambu) in charge of Chakpa village, named Konkhang and others of Moirang to Tamu to ask for the hand of Shan (Kabaw) girl. When Khonku Laihouba arrived at Tamu, Ningthoukhomba made a secret strategy that the soldiers deputed by him in secret would attack the village of Tamu. Accordingly, his soldiers raided the Shan village, entered every house and killed the queen of the Shan chief of Tamu. The same night the soldier left Tamu and returned Poirei kingdom. This raid was very daring adventure of king Ningthoukhomba and it made his presence felt in Kabaw valley. The Tamu chief was very annoyed and took the vow to avenge the assassination of his dear queen. He threatened to kill Lambu Konkhang for the foul play. The Lambu appears to be quite a smart official. He kept word and requested the Tamu chief that he might be killed after identification of the right raiders by examining the left overs of their food packets; if the food packets were made of lotus leaves (Thamna) they belonged to the Moirang, and if they were made of banana leaves, they belonged to the Khuman. It was found out that the food packets were made of lotus leaves (Thamna) and thus the blame was put on the poor Moirangs who were implicated by the treacherous strategy of Ningthoukhomba. The Tamu chief was pacified and he told the Lambu of the Chakpas that when the Meiteis were going to invade Moirang he would cooperate in the expedition to Moirang. The time of the expedition would be when the orchid (Melei) blossomed. The orchid plant was separated and the branch was given to the Lambu sent by Ningthoukhomba whose policy succeeded tremendously. The raid to Tamu was between A.D. 1432 and A.D. 1443 ¹¹⁷

Invasion of Moirang

As decided already, the Shans of Tamu came to join the expedition to Moirang when the orchid bloomed.¹¹⁸ Ningthoukhomba invaded Moirang at the head of expeditory forces which consisted of nobles like Angom chief Hithalangloi, Yaiskul Lakpa, Luplen Lakpa, Kongyangba, LichonkLakpa, Tolongkhomba and chief of Tamu.¹¹⁹ The expeditionary forces led by Ningthoukhomba attacked the length and breadth of the seven villages of Moirang, namely, Khuyon, Seklou, Tunglou, Nganglou Ngangkha, Okchin, Lakkhong Khoinouremba, Ura Laiching and Yaosnu. The prosperous villages were burnt into ashes. The Moirangs were defeated¹²⁰. Several Moirang nobles were captured as prisoners. Both Cheitharol Kumbaba and Ningthourol Lambuba record that the Tamu chief Yiranchingba was also captured and brought to the capital. The Moirangs paid "Leishang" creeper as tribute to Ningthoukhomba. It was the first significant defeat of the Moirang. But Moirang was not crushed; she continued to exist as an autonomous principality for several centuries. The Meitei king's writ was fully established in the whole of Manipur valley. Resources of this fertile territory strengthened the Meitei state greatly. The feudal structure of the state was fully developed during the reign of Ningthoukhomba as indicated by the posts of nobles who participated in several military expeditions including the invasion of Moirang.

Expedition to Akla and Tarao Louchingphet

Cheitharol Kumbaba gives the date of a major event. In 1443, Ningthoukhomba went in a military expedition to the village of Akla Chingtombi in the eastern frontier. Akla village was inhabited by the Kabaw Shans and it was associated with the adventures of Poireiton and his consort Leinaotabi. This was a village which was invaded by the Heirem Khunjans for the riches of the village. The expeditionary forces invaded Akla in five directions and the Kabaw Shans were killed in large number. In this battle, the elephant of the Akla chief and other warriors were captured as war booties.

Then the king turned towards the south east and invaded the Tarao village Louchingphei which was located at Chingtompok range. This village was also associated with Poireiton who spent some time being sick from malarial fever.¹²¹

Raid by the Tangkhuls

One of the most romantic events of Ningthoukhomba's reign was the raid of the Tangkhul tribe from Tuisem village in his absence and the courage and skill demonstrated by his queen Linthoingambi in hoodwinking the raiding tribesmen into defeat and captivity. When king Ningthoukhomba went to invade Akla village, the Tangkhul raiders invaded the capital to capture the paddy which was stored at the big state granary by the clans. Queen Linthoingambi and her maids got dressed in male dress. She put on the king's costume to meet the Tangkhul raiders who came fully armed with spears. The queen pretending to be the king met the Tangkhul raiders and asked them why they did not come to help him in the Akla expedition. The raiders lost heart when they saw the king and reported that they came to have an audience with the king. The queen entertained them with wine mixed with tobacco leaves and they were all drunk. All the drunk raiders were hooked by ropes in the neck and tied at the poles of the granary. The chief of Tuisem Tangkhul named Hen Puringba was captured. Linthoingambi was described as the captor of Puringba ¹²². She is reported to have raided the Tangkhul villages of Sunaching and Mongba Hiyanglam. She also invaded the Kabui Yangla in the east, Khongyang Kumphei, Leishokpung in the south. She also conquered Kharam in the south and defeated the Luhuppas. Further in the east in Kabaw valley. She invaded and conquered the good agricultural Kabow valley at Namtongpan and captured a Shan warrior, "Chaopha Shamchin". These are incredible military exploits of the queen which are referred to in Ningthourol Lambuba.¹²³

Ningthoukhomba's powerful rule attracted immigrants from the east and west. Kabaw Shans were also settled in Manipur valley and they married Manipuri women and were ultimately absorbed in Meitei society.

After a successful reign of 35 years, Ningthoukhomba died in 1467. The Meitei state was completely formed despite the autonomy of Moirang. The Ningthouja kingdom had become, a completely feudal state.

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3. N. Khelchandra, *Chada Laihui*, p. 2.
4. W.I. Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 538-39.
5. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 4.
6. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 1.
7. *Pakhangba Phambal*, p. 23. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p.5.
8. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 5. W. I. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 538.
9. O. Bhogeswar Singh, *Ningthourol Sheireng*, pp. 196-201.
10. *Chada Laihui*, p. 2.
11. *Ningthourol Sheireng*, pp. 202-3.
12. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*. p. 2.
13. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 42.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Funan was also associated with the Luwang clan; so Funan was described as belonging to Luwang clan.
16. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
17. W.I. Singh, *op. cit.*, 530, thinks that Nganglou was a place inhabited by Nganglou tribes in upper Iril river. The village of Lokkha-Haokha should be located at somewhere south of Sagolmang and north of Nongmaiching hills in north east Imphal valley. He further surmises that Telheiba was a Funan tribesman of the Austro-Asiatic group (though he does not give any elaboration). The wife of Taothingmang was also a girl of Hao-Khu tribe inhabiting the village of Lokkha-Haokha.
18. W.I. Singh gives a reign of 20 years A.D. 1055-75
19. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 44.
20. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 2.
21. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 8.
22. O. Bhogeswar, *Ningthourol Sheireng*, p. 220.
24. W.I. Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 540.
24. *Pakhangba Nongkarol*, pp. 22-24
It is a later interpolation of Shakta Hindu worship of Durga.
25. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 8.
26. *Cheitharol, Kumbaba*, p. 2., R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *op. cit.*, p.44 (A.D. 364-79), W.I. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 540
27. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 2., R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 44 gave A.D. 379-94 as his regnal period.
28. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p.8. and pp. 25-26
29. O.B. Singh, *Ningthourol Sheireng*, pp.221-22, gives a very interesting account of Pengsiba's reign. He had a beautiful daughter named Lairen Chengbi Chengkhubi and she was married to the Khuman chief. His wife died and he married another wife who was the mother of Kaokhangba. During his reign, a big flood occurred and it caused a great hardship and suffering to the people. In order to prevent frequent recurrence of floods, he deepened the river beds in Manipur valley. He also took up a gigantic work of making a diversion of the Turel Achouba river at Thingba Karong to the river Gwai (Barak) in Maram hills of Manipur north. A legend says that a wonder prince was born to the queen of Pengsiba in his absence. The wonder child just after his birth without-cutting umbilical chord proceeded to Thingba Karong to help his father who of course relished the behaviours of his wonder-child. The diversion of the river was successfully completed with the help of this child and the king returned to the capital. There was a duel between the king and his small child in which the prince

was defeated and exiled out of the kingdom. The name of the child was called Chengjeng. This is simply a myth. Pengsiba introduced nine room palace building at Kangla.

30. *Pakhangba Nongkarol*, p. 25 refers to a myth that during his reign, Pensiba was challenged by neighbouring rulers. He made the necessary preparations to fight and defeated Thongnang Mayang chief, Awa Tangtoi chief. These are later interpolation and additions which are not historical. He also defeated unspecified tribal chiefs.
31. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 2., R.K. Jhalajit Singh, p. 44. give A.D. 394-411., W.I. Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 541 gives A.D. 1115-1130
32. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, pp. 8 and 26.
33. Ningthourol Sheireng mentions a legend that Chingjeng who was defeated by Pengsiba and exiled to the west, sent his two sons to the kingdom.
34. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, pp. 8 and 26.
35. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 2., W.I. Singh, p. 541.
36. *Pakhangba Nongkarol*, p. 29, *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 10.
37. *Pakhangba Nongkarol*, p.27.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Pakhangba Nongkarol*, pp. 29-31.
40. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 16. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, pp. 2-3. Panditraj A.D. Sharma, *Pakhangba Clan Geneology of Ningthouja* p. 109, W.I. Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 542, Kaireima was the 2nd queen and the mother of Sameirang. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 45 writes that Sameirang was born of the first queen Kaireima. The Ningthouja geneology says that Naophangba married Kaireima Yaoreibi, Kaireima gave birth to Sameirang and Yaoreibi, Thamang Lang.
41. *Ningthourol Lambuba* p. 32, *Pakhangba Nongkarol*, p. 31, *Shakok Lamlen*, p. 9-12.
42. N. Khelchandra, *Ariba Manipur Sahitya Itihas*, Gangmumei Kabui, Imphal, A *Short Historical Account*, JNU, Imphal, 1974-75.
43. *Shakok Samlen*.
44. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 3. The regnal years was 428-508 A.D. But W.I. Singh gives a reign of 30 years in 11th century (1140-71 A.D.)
45. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
46. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 3.
47. Geneology of Ningthouja clan reported in A.B. Sharma's *Pakhangba*, p. 109.
48. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 3.
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50. Geneology of the Angom reproduced in A.B. Sharma's *Pakhangba*, p. 110.
51. Mutum Bahadur, P. Gunindro, *Epigraphic records of Manipur*. Vol. I. Imphal, 1986 pp. 17-19.. The Khoibu inscription No.2 runs this in free English translation : Yaoreibi Chanu's progeney Sameirang and Thangmanglang's place to the Khoi(bu) Maring Fort, attendant of the deity in charge of temple (abode), making malt (wine); tiger goes beserk, it is taboo beware: This was issued by king Marjit and it refers to the conquest of Khoibu Maring by Sameirang.
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6

Regional Principalities

Integration of Clan Chiefdoms and Principalities

The theory of clan heptarchy on the assumption that each of the seven clans of the Meiteis had a separate principality at the time of king Nongda Lairen Pakhangba is not collaborated by any historical evidence. Rather there were perhaps more than seven chiefdoms and principalities at different levels of political formation in Manipur valley ruled by different ethnic and tribal groups before, during and after Pakhangba's reign. The clan or Salai was both a political unit and a kin group of the Meiteis which was constituted by merging or amalgamating different ethnic and tribal groups under one kin group's name. During the historical period, there were seven clans of the Meiteis but there were five principalities ruled by five clan chieftains who were also both political and social heads of the respective clans. The foremost among them was the kingdom of Kangla established by Pakhangba whose dynasty was the Ningthoujas which, though the name was coined later on, became the name of the clan; the Luwang principality, the principality of the Angoms, the Khuman principality and the kingdom of Moirang. The Khabas who ruled once at the Kangla and put up a strong challenge to Pakhangba were already destroyed by the rulers of the Ningthouja dynasty, and the Nganbas had already ceased to be a political power. During the same period, the Chengleis, the Sarang Leishangthem, the Heiren Khunjan, the Chakpas and the Mangangs had village level chiefdoms. It has been suggested that there were foreign sponsored principalities like the Bangal (Mayang?) principality at Lammangdong, the Shan or Kabaw

sponsored Kege principality and Moriya pricipality as hypothesized by W.I. Singh.¹

The chronicles of the Ningthouja and the Moirang principalities and the geneologies of the clans give some informations about the history of these units but they are too sketchy. However, the chronicles of Moirang, supplemented by other literary sources are quite plenty and throw enough light to reconstruct the skeletal dynastic history of this particular principality. The following account of the regional and clan principalities and their amalgamation with the Ningthouja kingdom has been reconstructed with the help of the geneologies of the respective clans and dynasties.²

Sarang-Leishangthem (Chengleis)

Sarang-Leishang was the oldest ethnic group of the traditional age known as Khunung Chak, the third of the traditional ages of the Meiteis.³ According to Thiren Layat, an ancient text, Pakhangba who was staying in the moon (an allegorical explanation of a hiding place) was persuaded by Taoroinai to come down; and the act of persuasion was called Them or Themba in Meitei; hence Leishangthem or Sarang-Leishangthem.⁴ But M. Norendra says that "Sarang" means a big group.⁵ According to him Sarang Leishang was the first ruling group, or an ethnic group with rudimentary political organisation according to available historical texts and the traditions of ancient Manipur.⁶ According to Leisemba Lon, Sarang Leishang lived in Khunung chak of the Meitei age.⁷ The manuscript "Lai Khunda" records that in the first age of Hayichak, the Mangangs were kings, then the Nganba became rulers, followed by others and Sarang Leishang.⁸ We may describe the geneology of Leishangthem based on Leishangthem.⁹

"Ko" was the great (serpent) god, Ko gave birth to two sons: Nungkarol Nongtom Sangba and Khakpa; Khakpa was known as Tanou Tarengba. Khakpa became the progenitor of a lineage called Khuyonthem. There were several chiefs, then came Pakhang Yoirelba, Khum Khum, Walne, Nungou Yimthangba who had two brothers: Thengkoiba and Lamlekshang. Lamelkshang became Kabui tribe, Thengkoiba became Haorok Konthou and Nungon Yinthangba Leishangthem.

These Sarang Leishangthem chiefs married the daughters of the chiefs of Mangang group. One Leishangthem girl was married to Naokhangba who defeated her husband the Chenglei chief as recorded

in Ningthourol Lambuba and Chengleiron. This queen was already pregnant at the time of forcible marriage and Naophang Ahanba was born of her. Naophang Ahanba who was the real son of the Chenglei chief became a Chenglei.

There is a chronicle called Kangbarol which gives a list of eighty chiefs or rulers or clan heads (Pibas), which according to M. Norendra belong to the Sarang-Leishangthem. Thiren Layat gives a list of eighteen rulers, twenty rulers and fortysix rulers in the three traditional ages respectively. The geneology of rulers given in Thiren Layat according to M. Norendra is the same with the geneology of the Leishangthem group.

Out of the Sarang-Leishangthem, a group was grown out and it came to be known as the Chenglei after their defeat at the hands of the Angoms and subsequent decline of Sarang Leishangthem from the reign of their chief, Khari Kharangba. The Angoms asserted their importance and strength, then the Khabas occupied the Kangla or lands near about the Kangla. But Sarang Leishangthem and Chenglei were absorbed into the Meitei and became a clan only.

The Khabas and the Nganbas

Very little is known about the early history of the Khabas and the Nganbas who were separate ethnic groups originally but in an extended period of varying political fortunes, they were integrated in single blended clan known as the Kha-Nganba. However, during the pre-Pakhangba period, the Khabas appear to be the most powerful tribe in the kingdom of Kangla. The ancient texts including geneologies and traditions refer to the Khabas being in the occupation of Kangla before and during the struggle with Nongda Lairen Pakhangba for the political control of the Kangla.¹⁰ Whoever controlled the Kangla, both a seat of power and abode of religious rites and rituals controlled the destiny of the people of the Imphal valley or the Meiteis. The Khabas occupied the territory around the Kangla in the middle of Imphal valley. Their land was bounded by the Langol hills in the west, Khonghampat in the north, Langmaiching (Nongmaiching) in the east, and Lamdaibung in the south. It was the same territory which was occupied by Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. The Khaba geneology gives the names of the ancestors of the Khabas who were not necessarily chiefs or rulers. According to this geneology,¹¹ the list runs as follows:

“Leipirel gave birth to Tourel Kha; Tourel Khaba was born of Leithemlen, Tourel Kha was born of Leishanglen. Toutinglin was born

of Leitham Chanu, Toutangton was born of Leirai Ningthem Chanu. Tarang was born of Mahou Ningthou Chanu, followed by Khaba, then Leishanglen who went up to the hills to live there". Another tradition says that the Khabas descended from Taoroinai, a mythical dragon which was a form or vehicle of God Pakhangba, then Arangpa, Tangmaringpa, Leimetao, Tarang Khoinucha whose son was Taoren Khaba. No other historical texts refer to these ancestors of the Khabas.¹² But there are historical references to Khaba Sokchroba or Khaba Leirenhan and Khaba Tarang Khoinucha. Khaba Sokchroba was a king of the Kangla. Tarang Khoinucha was the father of Toren Khaba of the tradition. In Panthoibi Khongkul, Panthoibi, the daughter of the Mangang chief refused to accept the marriage proposal of Chenglei chief Sopaiba but married the Khaba chief, Khaba Tarang Khoinucha. But after the marriage, Panthoibi left her husband and ran away with her paramour, the Langmai chief, Chingsomba. Khaba Khoinucha chased them. The couple after hiding for some time returned to Langmaiching. Khaba Khoinucha challenged Chingsomba in a duel in which the latter was killed.

Soon the Khabas declined and there was a political vacuum. And Nongda Lairen Pakhangba with the help of the three clans, the Angom, Luwang and Mangang contested for the throne and occupied the Kangla. But the Khabas contested the supremacy of Pakhangba. Poireiton, the coloniser was perhaps another contestant who was of course, defeated by Pakhangba. The elder brother of Poireiton, named Thongaren or Thawaren also came to Imphal valley and aligned with the Khabas at a later stage. It is said that Khamjingkon, son of Puroi Lemnusu, sister of Puleiromba, was the founder of a collateral line of Nganbas who did not possess any political status. The Nganbas under Khamjingkul settled in the foothills on the periphery of the valley.

After Nongda Lairen Pakhangba occupied the throne of Kangla, the Khabas rose into rebellion and attacked Pakhangba who was defeated by Khaba chief Khaba Nongjengba. After the defeat, Pakhangba fled to Moirang for a political asylum. The Khabas ruled the Kangla for some time. The Khaba rule was oppressive and the people were not happy. Pakhangba was given assistance by a Moirang prince named Chaoba Shaubol Ngamba. The Moirang forces defeated and killed Khaba Nongjengba and all the members of his family including his son Sangai Telheiba and daughter Yichuppa. All of them were buried together.¹³ In the absence of their chief, the Khabas were scattered all over the country. Many fled to the hills and became hill tribes. A wise

Khaba scholar named Khaba Tangalba surrendered to Pakhangba by hiding under his throne. Pakhangba forgave him and saved his life. Some Khabas were saved by Puleiromba, the chief of the Angom clan.

Meanwhile, the Nganbas were scattered all over the principalities in the country.

The Khabas, though defeated, were waiting for an opportunity to hit back at Pakhangba. According to Pakhangba Phambal,¹⁴ Nongda Lairen Pakhangba and his queen Laisna lived in constant fear of the Khaba rebels. Pakhangba was speared to death by Khaba Tousuba and his dead body was thrown into the Nungjeng pond. Pakhangba's queen Laisna fled the Kangla capital and lived among the Shelloi Langmais. Though the Khabas were able to assassinate Pakhangba, they did not have the strength and number to capture political power. Then the Khabas and Nganbas became a social group or a kin group of the Meiteis. After the reign of Naothingkhong, they were blended with a single clan known as the Kha-Nganba.

LUWANG PRINCIPALITY

There is obscurity about the founder of the Luwang ruling dynasty. The Luwang clan geneology gives a divine origin to the clans of the Meiteis which was a later interpolation or manipulation. However, according to Salai Leihourol¹⁵, Poireiton who was the popular folk hero of Poireiton Khunthokpa's fame is projected as the founder or the progenitor of the Luwang clan. He was both, like other clan chiefs, political chief and social head (Piba) of the Luwangs. According to Luwanglon (geneology of the Luwang)¹⁶, the following is the geneology of the Luwang clan; "Heiphurel gave birth to Pongthang Ponghan who was succeeded by Nongdamlen Akhuba, then Kurumel Meinaiba, Kurumlel Heinaidaba whose son was Ningthou Heironglel Longjumba who appeared to be a chief of the Luwang." He had three children: a son, Ningthou Heirong Ngangthon Nganglen, Poireiton (Khonphang Atomba) and a daughter named Laisna (?)

According to Mahou Naophamlon,¹⁷ the Luwangs settled first at Kekrupan, then in Langkon hills. But according to Langten Khuya manuscripts,¹⁸ the Luwang territory was from Liklai Leima Chingjin to Hou Thangwai which cannot be identified. Traditionally Hou Thangwai covered Lamdeng, Kameng, Mayang Langjing, Terak, Urak, Chirang Luwangsangbam, Khonghampat chingjin, Sekmai, Khoiri Khul and Lamphel. The river or stream in the Luwang country was

Luwangyi (li) which still flows from Tamphaching of Kameng to Lamdeng and into Irong stream of Iroishemba.¹⁹ Poireiton Khunthokpa records that Poireiton after unsuccessful adventure came and settled at Lamdeng village.²⁰ Pakhangba Nongkarol further states that Poireiton became a chief of a Poirei village (Poirei Ningthou=Poirei village chief).²¹ Poireiton settled among the Luwangs after his colonizing adventure.²² The adventure of Poireiton has already been discussed in connection with his struggle for the throne against Pakhangba. And according to Luwang Lon, the first ruler of the Luwangs was not Poireiton but Khunthiba.²³ However, W. Ibohal Singh has claimed that Poireiton was not only the chief of Luwang but he was also the first king of the Poirei (Meitei)²⁴ founding a dynasty of the Chekkan. No other records record that Poireiton was the king of the Poirei, nor of the Luwang clan. However, the said scholar's view will be discussed below:

Poireiton became the first formal king of the Poirei. He was the younger brother of king Thongaren of Khamnung Sawa. He migrated with a band of settlers who entered Imphal valley from a north easterly direction and settled at Kangla Tongbi on the foot hill of the Koubru Range. He gave his name "Poirei" to be the name of the region and the tribe. Poireiton was a widower with six children before he left for colonization. He married his brother's wife Leima Leinaotabi. His people after settling at Lamdeng became very prosperous by rearing cattles and bulls. The said scholar even presents a reign of hypothetical forty years for Poireiton (A.D. 810-50).

We do not accept this proposal of according kingship to Poireiton. W. Yumjao Singh also agreed that Poireiton did not become a king.²⁵ The Luwangs became grazier and cattle rearers. But we do not agree with W. Yumajo Singh's view that Poireiton was an Aryan colonizer from India.²⁶

Successors of Poireiton: Shingtabung, Pamingnaba and Arong

The Luwang geneology shows that the son of Poireiton was Shingtabung whose experience of death and revival was referred to in the Poireiton Khunthokpa. Shingtabung's sons were Pamingnaba and Arong. Shingtabung's wife was Santhong Purumba Chanu. His second son Arong was the progenitor of the Khuman clan. His first son Pamingnaba remained within the Luwang clan. Pamingnaba gave birth to Luwang Khunthiba.

Luwang Khunthiba

Khunthiba was the first Luwang king according to the Luwang geneology known as Luwanglon. Nothing, however, was known about the rule of Khunthiba who married Haobaru Namoinū. Hongnem Luwang Punshiba was the most well known of all the Luwang chiefs. His name has been referred to by many literary, historical and religious texts of ancient Manipur. Because of his long life, he was given the title of "Punshiba" (one who lived long). He lived till the death of the Meitei king Ura Konthouba, father of Naothingkhong. During his reign, the Luwang principality became a seat of great learning and scholarship. Hongnem Yoi Khunjaoba (later on Naothing Khong) was sent to him for instruction in statecraft, religion, literature and folklore. During his time, horse training came to be mastered by the Meiteis. The Luwang chief himself trained horses at a hillock known as Sagollakpa Chingjin (the hill where the horses were trained). He is supposed to have invented the making of boat as indicated in Hijing Hirao text. He also introduced boat race later on.

Luwang Punshiba had nine wives and many sons. Perhaps discord set in among this descendents after his death. The Luwangs became greatly weakened. Politically and militarily, the Luwangs never posed as a challenge to the Ningthouja dynasty. In the coronation of its founder Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, Luwang Langmaiba, a Luwang chief or an official priest of the Luwangs took an active role.

It has been conjectured by several scholars on the basis of geneologies and some chronicles that the Luwangs were split into Luwang proper and the Khumans whose principality continued to maintain their autonomy till the middle of the fourteenth century. The Luwangs, in course of time, accepted the tributary status in the court of the Ningthouja kingdom. Their chief, Luwang Ningthou became a member of the Ningthouja court.

However, according to Luwanglon, a son of the youngest wife of Luwang Punshiba lived in Khuman principality with his mother who was divorced. He hunted a brow antlered deer (Sangai) the prized and coveted deer in Luwang territory. His father requested him not to take away the hunted animal. His son agreed to return the hunted animal only when he was given the family heirloom of goddess Imoinu, goddess of wealth (an image of the deity which Luwang Punshiba kept at his residence at Shangai Yumpham in Lamphel). Luwang Punshiba died when Ura Konthouba ruled in Ningthouja kingdom.

Pana

Pana was the next chief. He was the third son of Luwang Punshiba. According to tradition which is widely quoted but hard to believe was that Luwang Punshiba had a long life of five hundred years. If this was true, his successors and sons and grandsons must have been proportionally old. Therefore, it is difficult to accept the age of Punshiba which had a span of twelve generations that his son married Naothingkhong's daughter as given in the Luwang geneology. This calls for an analysis in depth of the evidences available in the geneologies and related sources.

Lai Ningthouba.

Pana was succeeded by Lai Ningthouba. He was the fifth son of Punshiba by his wife Irem Khongneishing.

Chingcharoi Thapanpa.

Lainingthouba was succeeded by Chingcharoi Thapanpa. He was the eighth descendent of Punshiba's son Leiruchengba.

Kuraoba

Chingcharoi Thapanpa was succeeded by Kuraoba, the tenth descendent from Nongtangnu, the adopted daughter of Haoshiyang, the queen of Luwang Punshiba. He belonged to the group of Mantom. There was no ruler found so far after Kuraoba. There was no Luwang chief or ruler during the reign of Meitei king Yaraba. The Luwangs became absorbed into Meitei feudal hierarchy.

Funan Telheiba

There was one Nanba who was a descendent of Thongaiba Chanu, the fifth wife of Luwang Punshiba. He stayed with Khoyum Funan Telheiba who was a great archer. After the death of Khoyum, Nanba became Funan Telheiba assuming the chiefship of Funan.

Khoidom-Mandom - line: Phantek Shoknaiba

The adopted daughter of Luwang Punshiba, named Liklabicha Nongtangnu, gave birth two sons, Khoidom and Mandom by an "legal

connection with the Angom chief, Puleiromba who acknowledged the fatherhood of the two sons but did not take them to Angom principality. They grew up in the Luwang principality. They were absorbed into Luwang lineage. To the line of Khoidom belonged Phantek Shokanaiba who ruled at Lammangdong over the Khuroi and Lanloi groups who were perhaps under the hegemony of the Luwang principality. Phantek Shoknaiba was the most famous of the Luwang rulers after Luwang Punshiba. He married the daughter of the Khuman chief but his relation with his father-in-law was not good. The Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba refers to his attempt to kill his father-in-law by inviting him in a feast of merit. The Khuman chief planned to invade Lammangdong with the military help from Moirang. The joint forces of the Khuman and the Moirang principalities defeated Phantek Shoknaiba and destroyed his principality at Lammangdong.

The Luwangs appear to be a peaceful group. They were able to keep good relations with the Ningthouja rulers. Their diplomacy enabled them to maintain their autonomy. The Luwang principality, instead of becoming a military power, became a seat of learning, mostly during the reign of their good chief Luwang Punshiba. The contribution of the Luwangs was in the field of culture and peaceful economic activities. Poireiton, a colonizer who was given shelter by the Luwangs became one of the greatest culture heroes of Manipur who contributed a lot to the making of the civilization in Imphal valley in the historical times.

THE ANGOM PRINCIPALITY

The Angom was the common name given to a number of small tribes who were amalgamated under one social fold whose political chieftain and social head was Puleiromba who is regarded as the progenitor of the Angom and a senior contemporary of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. The Angom geneology gives a common descent with other clans of the Meiteis, which as pointed out earlier, was formed after the establishment and enforcement of the clan both as a political unit and lineage group bound by the marriage rule known as the Yek system. Originally, according to N. Ibochouba Singh, the Angoms were divided into three groups: the group of Tari, the group of Chingwanglak Puleiromba and the group of Khoidom. The group of Tari was descended from the Sarang Leishangthem clan. "Tari was born of 'hakpa, Pakhang Yoirenba was born of Tari and Puleiromba was born

of Pakhang Yoirembe and Puleiromba gave birth to Khoidom."²⁷ The other tribes which were amalgamated into the Angom principality and who accepted the Angom clan status were the Shelloi, Langmei, Nongmai, Nongbal and others. The traditional Angom territory covered areas like Nongmaiching hills, Kasom Yongpham in the east, Telou Chana, Lamlai in the north, Phaknung and Angom Leikai in the west and Yaripok in the south.²⁸

The chief of the Angom, Puleiromba was a prominent leader who played a significant role in making Nongda Lairen Pakhangba the king. According to tradition, the Angoms were believed to have migrated from the north east from the Khangkhui caves near Ukhrul. Perhaps, they might have lived for some time in the caves of Khangkhui which provided temporary shelter to the migrating people.²⁹ Two brothers Angouba and Chingsomba came out of the Khangkhui caves; they migrated to Sokpao, Kasemjao Phu and Chatong and went to Kwathel range, then Mutao-Lukhu and arrived at Shandang Iranpham. Chingsomba the elder brother went to the land of the Thangal tribe in the north and his younger brother, Angouba, came to Kangla where the throne was vacant. The nobles were in search of a king and they made Angouba the king. Later on Chingsomba also came to Kangla in search of his younger brother. An elephant was sent out to kill Chingsomba who tamed the elephant instead. The people wanted to make him the king. Chingsomba refused the offer of kingship on the plea that he came in search of his brother Angouba. But the people made the two brothers, the joint rulers. They were driven out by Pakhangba and the two brothers fled to Nongmaiching. Angouba became Angom and Chingsomba became Nongmaithem. This legend points to the migration of the proto-Angom tribes from the hills. The Angom and Ningthouja geneologies show that Puleiromba was the son of Kuptreng and founder of Angom clan. According to reliable texts including Pakhangba Phambal, Puleiromba was one of the three clan chieftains who were responsible for making Nongda Lairen Pakhangba the ruler of Kangla. We have already discussed the relationship between Puleiromba, Leinung Yaibirok, (Pakhangba's mother) and Luwang Langmaiba as contemporaries. Puleiromba, during the coronation of king Pakhangba was given a higher ritual status as he was coronated as the Angom chief before the coronation of Pakhangba. But the Angom Chief accepted the tributary status and was given the title of the Angou panba by the Ningthouja kings. Of the Angom tribes, the Shelloi Langmais who were hill dwelling tribes of Nongmaiching hills were an

autonomous tribe who maintained relation with the Ningthoujas. Even the wife of king Pakhangba, queen Laisna, after the assassination of the king fled to the land of the Shelloi Langmais for shelter. Her son Khuyoi Tompök married a Shelloi Langmai girl.

As the Angoms had already accepted the tributary status, they did not have an independent history of their own as such. The Angou Panba or the Angom chief was an honoured member of the Ningthouja court, and the office of the Angom Ningthou continued to the twentieth century even. The Ningthouja-Meitei state was built on the alliance of Ningthouja-Luwang and the Angom.

However, as a feudal noble with great control over other Angom groups, the Angom chief played a supporting role to the Ningthoujas. So the Angom-Ningthouja political and social alliance came into conflict with the Ningthouja ruler at times as the Ningthoujas tried to impose their direct control over the Angoms who asserted their independence at times.

The conflict between the Angoms and the Ningthoujas according to the chronicles was started during the reign of the Ningthouja king Sameirang. The Angom principality was a tributary one, but they tried to maintain their separate identity.³⁰

Ura Konthouba's conflicts with the Shelloi Langmai have already been described. His son Naothingkhong married a Shelloi Langmai girl named Pitanga in defiance of his father. The Shelloi Langmais invaded the western hills. They were ambushed and defeated by Urakonthouba. Naothingkhong was driven out of the Shelloi country. After Naothingkhong became the king, he did not make Pitanga his chief queen. So Pitanga died of shock but she was later worshipped as Yumjao Leima by the order of king Naothingkhong.

During the reign of Loiyamba of the Ningthoujas of the twelfth century, the Angom chiefs were employed in the civil and military service of the Meitei state. Haokhei Lanthaba, the Angom chief was sent to invade Sekta. The Angom and Loiyamba were closely connected.³¹ But the Shelloi Langmais held out to hold on their autonomy as tribal chiefdom in Nongmaiching hills till the reign of Puranthaba (1247-1263 A.D.). During the invasion of Moirang by Ningthoukhomba in 1432 A.D., the Angom chief, Hitha Langloungeba participated in the expedition. In the invasion of Ningthouja kingdom by the Mayang from the west, the Angom chief Loiyamba was sent to check them. On his failure to check them, prince Nongthomba was sent by Kiyamba. Loiyamba was rebuked by the

arrogant prince but by their joint efforts the Mayangs were defeated. The chronicles refer to the conflict between the Meitei king Koiremba and Loyangamba. Koiremba married Loyangamba's daughter Luwangbi who was ill-treated by the king. Even Loyangamba was insulted by the king.

All the Angoms, who supported Loyangamba were assassinated by the conspiracy of the Meitei king. It appears that the Angoms retaliated by killing Koiremba's maternal uncle's family.³² After the death of Lam Kiyamba (1522 A.D.) his minor son Nonginphaba ascended the throne. The queen dowager Changning Phabi became a mistress of the Angom chief Kiyamba. Kiyamba became so powerful that he behaved as if he was the king. The minor king and his mother were in his hands. According to Cheitharol Kumbaba, Kiyamba wore egret feathers dyed red with lae. Queen Changning Phabi objected to this as it was exclusively reserved for the Ningthoujas only. Kiyamba got furious and executed the queen dowager and minor king. We may reproduce the observation of W. Yumjao Singh on the Angom-Ningthouja conflict. "Ever since the eventful insultation of the Angom king Loijangamba by the young and obstinate prince (Nongthomba) during the campaign against the Mayangs the throne of the Ningthoujas was in a very precarious condition. Apparently Loijangamba was an official of the Ningthouja kings but he was very powerful, he had his own territory, his services to the Ningthouja clan was rather obliging them. To give a blow to his pride was not easily forgotten. Thus during the short period of forty years or less there were not less than five kings, each of them was the victim of political assassination and murders. Whoever would incur the displeasure of Loijangamba was doomed to death, man or woman; even his own paramour, the widowed queen, mother of Nongin phaba was not spared for trifling crime of telling him that the red egret feather was only to be worn by the Ningthouja kings and not by the Angoms.

The most remarkable in the character of Loijangamba was that if he so wished he could have annexed the territories of the Ningthoujas to his own and assumed their throne, but he never did this — he would honour the old practice that the throne of the Ningthoujas was for the Ningthoujas and that of the Angoms was for the Angoms".³³

Angom Geneology

According to the Angom geneology,³⁴ Puleiromba had three wives. Pithet Leima, Haoningshing Nureisengbi and Liklabicha. His first

queen had seven sons, the eldest of whom was Khamnung Iwaithang who succeeded his father as the Angom chief. He was followed by Chengnil Yoiremba, Akong Khunsa, Tondon, Chingbang, Ongde Khendaba, Ata Kongyamba, Thangwai Khundaba, Puranthaba, Leitang Lanthaba, Lairen Hikhamba, Charel Phaba, Kwakpa Thawanthaba, Nongpok Kaoshomba, Kambong Phaba, Khongjamba, Panshayamba, Kiyamba, Langloingampa, Tangkhungamba, Lamthetngamba, Kiyam Telhangngamba, Maringamba, Marambasing, Konkhunba, Loikhumsa, Nungshong Ngamba, Puring Khomba, Teteshowmani, Birmani, Hemmani, Rasmani, Tangshon Ngamba, Soidingngamba and Vinodlal.

THE KHUMAN PRINCIPALITY

The Khuman geneology³⁵ gives a list of ancestors who were the joint forefathers of the Luwang and the Khumans. The Khumans were a cognate lineage descended from the Luwangs. The geneology records thus:

Nongdamlel Akhuba, Nongdamlen Ahanba, Kurumlel Menaiba, Heironglen Longjumba, Ningthou (chief) Heironglen Thonganglen who had two sons: Thouwaren and Poireiton. Poireiton's son was Tabung Singmaiba or Shingtabung who had two sons: Arong and Paming. Arong's descendents were regarded as Khumans and Paming's descendents were Luwang. The split occurred two generations after Poireiton who was depicted as the progenitor of both the Luwangs and the Khumans. The capital of the Khumans was located at Thoubal.³⁶ Earlier the Khumans were living in the western part of Imphal valley. When they moved to the east of Logtak lake, they came to be known as Khumans.³⁷ The Khuman territory was a part of the undivided principality of the Luwang-Khuman ancestors. However, in the historical times, the Khuman principality was in the south east Manipur valley, in the Thoubal region to the east of Loktak lake, bounded by the Ningthouja kingdom in the north and the hill tribes in the east. Their capital at Thoubal was later on shifted to Khuman Meikoipung near the present Mayang Imphal. The Khuman territory covered Thoubal Tomching, Mayang Imphal, Langthabal, Tentha, Khongjom, Wangjing and some times upto Sugnu. There is a proposition that Khuman was an amalgamation of Khuman-Kham groups of the Poireis (Meitei). And when they left their original country and settled to the east of Loktak, they absorbed different tribes like Kharoi, Hangol, Nongyai, Heirem and Khunjans; and they became sub-lineages within the Khuman social fold which was converted to Khuman Salai or clan.³⁸

Nongyai group was numerous and prominent; and Nongyai became a synonym of Khuman and Khuman-Nongyai became a blended proper term. According to the same scholar, as Khuman-Nongyai became a principality only during the reign of Ting Konhanba Nongyai, he should be regarded as the first chief of the Khumans. Before this, the geneology deals with that of the tribes who constituted the Khuman. However, despite his deficiency and inadequacy, Arong is indicated as the man who was responsible for founding the line of chiefs who built up the Khuman principality. Arong's son was Tumahanba who had two sons: Lungba and Nungthongai : Lungba settled at Thoubal and became a chief of the Khumans whereas his younger brother Nungthongai entered the services of the Luwang principality by holding the office of the Luwang Langmaiba. There was political conflict and matrimonial relation between the Khuman and the neighbouring principalities and chiefdoms like the Ningthouja kingdom, Moirang and Luwang principalities and the Heirem and the Khunjan. Lungba appears to be the first important Chief of the Khuman principality. He was succeeded by his son Yoirang Pok Punshiba. His son Kacheng Waiba ascended the Khuman throne after the death of Punshiba.

Matrimonial Alliance with the Ningthouja

With the coming of Kecheng Waiba, the geneology refers to the marriage of a Ningthouja (Wangam) princess named Leirum Chengpi, the daughter of Ningthouja king Punshiba. Their son was Mangba Khonpa who also married princess Leirum Langbi, daughter of king Naokhamba and their son was Khonpa Ningthoupa. He became the chief of the Khumans. This chief again married king Naophangba's daughter princess Thetpi Laipi and Laiphangba was born of this marriage. According to Cheitharol Kumbaba Naophangba ruled from 428 to 518 A.D (not necessarily accurate). So in the sixth century A.D. Khumans built up a friendly relation with the Ningthoujas. Naophangba also married Kairema, a daughter of the younger brother of Khuman chief Yoirangpok Punshiba.

Naothingkhong in Khuman Principality

The Khuman chief Laiphengba was succeeded by his son Punshi Yumoiba. According to Naothingkhong Phambal which was discussed

in an earlier chapter, when Punshi Yumoiba was ruling in Khuman principality, his contemporary in Ningthouja kingdom was Ura Konthouba. Punshi Yumoiba had no son. So when Hongnem Yoi Khunjaoba, the fugitive prince, son of Ura Konthouba fled from the Shelloi Langmais leaving behind his wife Pitanga and sought asylum for him. The Khuman chief readily granted assylum to him. Finding the young Meitei prince very lovely, the Khuman chief proposed to give his daugther Khayoirom Keirunghanbi in marriage to him. The Khuman chief while making this proposal, knew that the fugitive prince would one day become the king of the Ningthoujas after the death of his father Ura Konthouba. He married the Khuman princess. Naothingkhong was made to participate in the administrative affairs of the Khuman principality. Yumoiba sent the Ningthouja prince to Luwang principality for training in state craft. Ultimately, after the death of Ura Konthouba, Naothingkhong became the Ningthouja king and the Khuman princess became the chief queen of Naothingkhong.

Punshi Yumoiba in his old age was succeeded by Lenba Memaba, the son of his sister. The old king abdicated the throne in favour of his nephew. He and his family left the Khuman capital and settled at Loibi Luyan. During his old age, he had a son by his young wife Piyairok. This son Yoithang became the chief of Khuman after Lengba Memaba. In the Khuman geneology, the name of Langbe Memaba does not occur as he was not a Khuman himself.

Yoithang had three sons: Haoramhan, Haoram-Ningoi and Haoramton. There was a fratricidal conflict between the two elder brothers. Haoramhan succeeded his father. He was invited to attend a feast of merit (Ahong Kummei) of Phantek Shoknaiba, a Luwang ruler of Lammangdong. On this occasion, he borrowed a necklace from his younger brother Haoramton. A quarrel ensued over this necklace between the two brothers. Haoramton cut off the necklace from the neck of his elder brother and in that act he killed his own brother. The second brother Haoram Ningoi was very much shocked and frightened, and without claiming the throne, he fled to Moirang and sought asylum there. The granting of asylum was the occasion of the migration of the Khuman prince and his followers to Moirang. He was the ancestor of the Moirang culture and folk hero Khamba of the famous epic Khamba-Thoibi. In the absence of the elder brother, Haoramton, the fratricide, became the chief of the Khuman principality.

Haoramton married Thongaiba chanu and four sons were Mempomba, Athing Mongbipu, Thongpu Sanamba and Liklai Thakra.

Mempomba succeeded his father. Several families of the Khuman clan originated from these four brothers. Mempomba was succeeded by his son Thongleisom. The next king was Thongaithon who married two wives who respectively gave birth to two sons: Thongraiba and Yaithengpa. Thongraiba became the Khuman chief. His daughter Khayairon Haoreima was married to the Luwang phantek of Lammangdong. Later on, the Luwang chief invited his father-in-law, Thongraiba to a feast of merit at his capital and hatched a conspiracy to kill him. Haoreima came to know of this and informed her father of the conspiracy of her husband. Thus Thongraiba escaped.

Khuman-Moirang Joint Invasion

Thongraiba was very unhappy at this wicked conspiracy of the Luwang chief. He requested the king of Moirang, Ura Khundaba to help him in the invasion of the principality of Lammangdong. Ura-Khundaba agreed to the request and invaded Lammangdong to assist the Khuman forces. In the battle, the Luwang chief Phantek Shoknaiba was defeated.³⁹

Thongraiba's queen was Chingyai Nganu Chanu; and five sons were born: Shiyarong, Puran Khunoushiba, Thonghan Thongyai and Laipa. The five brothers were the progenitors of the several lineages of the Khuman clan. Shiyarong had two queens, a Meitei girl Thonggai Thanga, and Khunjan girl, Lairura Soyambi. The Meitei princess gave birth to Chekyamba. The Khunjan princess gave birth to five sons.

Chekyamba became the Khuman chief. During his reign, there was a quarrel between the Khumans and the Kambongs over the extraction of banana leaves. Chekyamba married Meitei princess Piyaithong who gave birth to two sons. The elder son Thingkon Liknaiba became the chief. He had two wives: Mungpi Leima and Khong Leima. The second wife had no issue. The first wife had four sons: Kokpa, Khamlangba, Ningthongkhong and Yaithengba. Khamlangba left the Khuman country and lived among the hill tribes. Yaithengba went to live in the court of the Meitei king. Kokpa became the Khuman chief but died very young. So his younger brother Yaithengba who was living in Ningthouja court of king Ayangba was summoned back and he ascended the Khuman throne. Yaithengba, before his departure for his homeland raised a memorial stone to commemorate his sojourn at the capital of the Meitei kingdom at Wangkhei Likkhum Pung. Yaithengba was thus a contemporary of king Ayangba. According to

Cheitharol Kumbaba, there was a dispute over the hunting right between the Ningthoujas and the Khumans at Moichaching. The Khuman invaded the Ningthouja kingdom but were defeated. Many Khumans were made prisoners.⁴⁰ Yaithengba married Ireng Naushang Langkam and had two sons. His eldest son, Namyok Phaba Chingpe Yongtam Thoubaba ascended the Khuman throne. He was succeeded by his son Thongpa.

Thongpa was succeeded by Thingkon Hanba, succeeded by Kainou Chingsomba, who was again followed by Pangchi Leinaotaba. The connection between Chingsomba and Leinaotaba was not known. Loinaotaba had two sons: Ikop Lanthaba and Moirang Sapha.

The eldest son, Ikop Lanthaba became the chief. He married a Ningthouja princess Naoramton, a daughter of Ningthouja king Keiphaba whose reign according to Cheitharol Kumbaba was 969-984 A.D. There was a close matrimonial connection between the Khuman and the Ningthouja, though distinct political autonomy and identity was maintained by the both the principalities. It seems that during the reign of Ikop Lanthaba, the Khuman principality was prosperous and powerful enough to gain respect from the northern kingdom. Of the Ningthouja's which was a rising power Cheitharol Kumbaba records that during the reign of Irengba, son of Keiphaba there was a battle fought between the Khuman and the Meiteis at Taknakha where the Khumans were defeated and twenty prisoners were taken.⁴¹ The matrimonial relations could not satisfy the rising Ningthouja kingdom's desire for territorial aggrandisement and expansionism.

Khuman-Meitei Conflict

During the later part of the twelfth century, during the reign of Ningthouja king Aton Yoirenba (1150-1163), his younger brother Iwanthaba conspired with the Khumans to drive out Aton Yoirenba from the Ningthouja throne. The defeated king took shelter in the Khuman country either during the reign of Ikop Lanthaba or his son Punshiba Khuren Chanba. The Meitei king Iwanthaba (1163-95) attacked the Khuman principality at Uchiwa. The invading Meitei forces killed the queen of the Khuman. The Khuman invaded the Ningthouja kingdom at Yoarou where the Khumans were defeated.⁴² About thirty Khuman soldiers were captured as prisoners.

Khurenchaba Punshiba was also the contemporary of king Thawanthaba of the Ningthoujas, who succeeded his father in 1195

A.D. Suddenly, the Khumans who were defeated earlier by the conspiratorial policy of Iwanthaba, followed a policy of friendship towards the Ningthoujas. According to the Khuman geneology⁴³ Khurenbaba married Chingkei Thanbi, the daughter of Thawanthaba. At the same time, the daughter of Khurenbaba, named Khuyoiron Shamphai was married to Thawanthaba. This exchange of daughters as wives of the respective rulers was a simple political arrangement without any ethical sense breaking the marriage customs of the Meiteis. And such an artificial alliance was doomed to be a complete fiasco.

Khurenbaba Punshiba invited Thawanthaba to make a joint invasion of the land of the Heiren Khunjans to the south of the Khuman country who were a rival of the Khumans. Thawanthaba helped the Khuman chief in defeating the Heiren Khunjans. The Khuman-Meitei victory over the Heiren Khunjans was of great satisfaction to the Khumans who inflicted severe revenge on the Heiren Khunjans. Soon the uneasy and fragile friendship was broken when Thawanthaba executed his queen Khuyoiron Shamphai because of a suspicion at the instigation of his first queen, of her illicit relations with an Angom noble Kwakpa Lanthaba. The Khuman king also retaliated by killing the Ningthouja princess Chingkei Thanbi, daughter of Thawanthaba. The Meitei forces invaded the Khuman principality and defeated the Khuman chief. The trouble started just after the return from the expedition to Heiren Khunjan. When Thawanthaba was returning by boat through the Khuman country, he was suddenly attacked by the Khuman forces under the command of Kwakpa Laiton panba who was killed by the king's forces. At the secret signal from his daughter, Thawanthaba escaped to the Ningthouja country. The Meitei princess was killed by her husband, the Khuman king in the way his daughter was killed by the Meitei king. The conflict between the Khuman and the Ningthoujas became a feature of the Khuman history in the twelfth century A.D.

Punshiba was succeeded by Charamba who was a contemporary of Chingthang Lanthaba (1231-42). The conflict was continued during his reign. The Cheitharol Kumbaba records the Ningthouja victory over the Khumans.

Yaoshungamba (Yaoshamba) who succeeded Charamba was an oppressive ruler. Though the Khumans could not do much against the Ningthoujas, Yaoshungamba invaded the Moirang Principality with a strong Khuman force. He attacked the village of a Moirang noble named Yaoshurakpa and won the battle. So he was called

Yaoshungamba (victor of Yaoshurakpa). Yaoshungamba had two wives, an Angom girl Taramsu and Yoiron Tompokpi. The first wife gave birth to Lamyai Kai Khinba who succeeded Yaoshungamba on the Khuman throne. However, the Ningthoujas continued to put pressure on the Khuman by several invasions. Meitei king Puranthaba invaded the Khuman at Poirou and defeated them. The defeat was very decisive; the Khumans would never revive again despite their best efforts. At the end of the thirteenth century, Moiranba (1278-1302) again invaded, the Khuman principality and defeated them.

Absorption of Khuman Principality into Ningthouja Kingdom

During the bad days of the declining fortune as a result of the Ningthouja aggrandisement, the Khuman chief was Lamyai Kaikhinba, son of Yaoshungamba, who was the contemporary of both king Thangbi Lanthaba (1302-23) and Kongyanba (1323-35). Lamyai Kaikhinba was already a weakened ruler. He was given a Ningthouja princess named Lokhik momnu Saphabi. A large quantity of royal dowries was presented him in form of slaves and cattle. After many years of peaceful life, the queen died leaving behind her husband, the Khuman chief dejected and lonely. After the death of his dear queen, Lamyai Kaikhinba left the Khuman capital and lived in the court of the Ningthouja king Kongyanba. With this significant event, the Khuman principality was absorbed into the Meitei kingdom. The Khumans ceased to be a political entity but continued to be a social group known as the Khuman Salai (clan). However, the Khumans were sure to be integrated politically one day as the social integration of the Khuman with the Meitei was vigorously followed by the Ningthouja kings. The adventure of Naothing-khong in the Khuman country shows that the Khumans accepted the stronger and superior political position of the Meiteis. As to the political system, it was almost similar with that of the Meiteis: there are ninetyeight Yumnak (families) under the Khuman clan.

The Khuman Chiefs

The Khuman chiefs, according to Khuman geneology were as follows:
 1. Tumanhanbi (son of Arong, founder of Khuman clan, son of Shingtabung son of Poireiton), 2. Lungba, 3. Yoirangpok Punshiba, 4. Karen Wayeng Mangpa, 5. Mongba Khonpa, 6. Khonbe Ningthouba,

7. Laimphangba, 8. Punshi Yumoiba, 9. Yoithongai, 10. Hacremban, 11. Haoromton, 12. Mempomba, 13. Thongleiron, 14. Chengkhong Thongraiba, 15. Puran Khunonshiba, 16. Shiyarong, 17. Thekyasamba, 18. Thikon Likmaba, 19. Kokpa, 20. Adon Yaithingba, 21. Shamjok Phaba Chingpa Yangton Thoubu, 22. Thongpu, 23. Thingkon Hanba, 24. Kainou Chingsomba 25. Kangching Leinaotaba, 26. Ikop Lanthaba, 27. Punshiba Khurenchanba, 28. Charamba, 29. Yaoshungamba, 30. Lamyai Kaikhinba.

The Khuman chief was given a titular tributary status in the Ningthouja court. He had become a noble of the Ningthouja kingdom. The absorption of the Khuman country on the other hand greatly strengthened the Meitei State.

There were thirty Khuman chiefs as indicated by the geneology who ruled for a pretty long time. The loss of independence of the Khuman principality was not due to the aggressive designs of the Ningthoujas alone. Their geographical positions made the Khuman Principality surrounded by autonomous principalities like the Moirang, Luwang, Heirem-Khunjan, Shelloi Langmais and the Ningthoujas. Even the Shans of Kabaw valley cast covetous eyes on Khuman principality. The resource base of the Khuman principality was the swampy land between the Loktak lake and Ikop. The dryland which could have been used for agricultural development was not plenty. Their access to the forest resources of the hills inhabited by the Marings, Anals, Moyon and others were very much limited. Therefore, the Khuman principality lacked the ecological advantage and a strong agricultural base.

By the time, Lamyai Kaikhinba joined the Meitei kingdom on his own volition, the Meitei and Khumans were socially integrated. With the liberal and social policy and strong military machinery backed by a strong economy of the Meiteis, the Khumans were sure to be absorbed into the Meitei kingdom.

The Heirem-Khunjans

The smaller ethnic and social groups who were found to have inhabited Imphal in the historical times were absorbed or amalgamated into the seven clans of the Meiteis. Of these smaller groups, the Heirem and the Khunjans maintained their autonomy for pretty long time in history. According to the literary works like Maibarol and Chainarol, the Heirem-Khunjans were found to have inhabited the areas around

Kakching.⁴⁴ They were in the south of the Khuman country and south east of the Moirang principality. According to Pandit Achouba Moirangthem Chandrasingh, the Heirem Khunjans was one of the old tribes of Manipur speaking a dialect of their own.⁴⁵ According to tradition, the Heirem-Khunjans were associated with Nungjeng, the pond in the ancient Meitei capital of Kangla. The most important chief of Heirem-Khunjans was Lumchenghanba. There are many references to the fight between Heirem-Khunjans and the Meiteis, the Khumans and the Moirang. But they were pressurised militarily by these three principalities. At one time, the Heirem Khunjans were too powerful for the Khumans who sought the Ningthouja military help to defeat the Heirem-Khunjan. Later on they were defeated and absorbed by the Ningthouja rulers.

HISTORY OF MOIRANG

Moirang is a little cradle of human civilisation in the south Manipur valley. Moirang is the name of a regional and ancient principality situated on the bank of the great fresh water lake known as the Loktak, inhabited by a community with the same name. Moirang is therefore a name of territory and an ethnic community. The history of Moirang is a story of rise, growth and decline of an ethnic group whose autonomy was submerged with the Meitei polity, society and culture. The chronicle of Moirang, and clan geneologies of the neighbouring principalities, supplemented by the rich ballads, folklore and oral traditions of her people point to the existence of a remarkable cradle of culture, civilisation and human creativity in south Manipur which was a rival to the Ningthouja kingdom in north Imphal valley for many centuries.

The origin and early history of Moirang are mystified in their old chronicles and traditions which require a rational and scientific interpretation which would enable any student in the reconstruction of the history of Moirang. Though, the literary works are not that enormous and numerous like that of the Meitei kingdom, the Moirang chronicles like, Moirang Ningthou Lambuba, Moirang Ningthourol, Moirang Kangleiron and the large number of texts dealing with religion, creative literature, cosmogony and many ballad and oral traditions provide a mine of information for the reconstruction of the history of Moirang.

Neolithic Culture at Napachik

The startling archaeological excavations at Napachik, near Wangoo in southern part of Moirang territory has well established that in the second millennium B.C. a neolithic culture existed in this part of Moirang.⁴⁶ The archaeological finds, specially, the potteries also indicate similarities between the Napachik culture and North China culture of the similar period. The geographical location of Moirang which covered the Khuga river basin and the hill route to the west attracted people of various ethnic background from south Asia and Upper Burma and beyond. Therefore, such a region would have natural multiplicity of ethnic groups amongst its population.

Origin of Moirang

The myths and traditions which are recorded in the manuscripts like Umanglon Puya, Leihou Naophamlon, Karalhou Puya, Thangjing Khunthoklon, Thiren Meiran Liba give the legendary account of the origin of Moirang.⁴⁷ According to these cosmogonical traditions, supreme god Kasa Ningthou created the universe, the Solar System, Sun, Earth, Moon, Fire, Water, and Wind. He created gods including a divine known as Moirang. The Supreme God willed to create man. He created seven goddesses. He also created a god called Nganba. He went down from Thangjing mountain and out of his union with goddess Leimaral Khongjang Leimahanbi Ngangoi was born. Ngangoi was the earliest name of Moirang. According to another legend, the Supreme God and goddess Leimarel, representing the sky and the earth gave birth to Ngangoi. The act of the sky and the earth was Keke according to Thangjing Khunthoklon and Thiren Liba.⁴⁸ Keke was corrupted to Kege and it was one of the earlier names of Moirang. Goddess Leimarel Leimahanbi indicated to her son Ngangoi the centre of the universe being located at Moirang (Ngangoi). So the land was called Leitak Ngangoi Pung, the place where Ngangoi was shown the land. It was also called Korou Ngongpahan Sana Lam Okpung the place where the heavenly god was welcome.⁴⁹

According to Leihou Naophamlon, seven goddesses and a male god named Nganba were created by Supreme God. And Nganba established the settlement.⁵⁰ Moirang Kangleirol Lambuba further records that Nganba was instructed to proceed to Keke Thangjing hills, Sareng hills, Chingsangmei range and settled at Ngankha.⁵¹ Karalhou

Puya depicts Nganba as the progenitor of several legendary rulers in ancient times. He had descendants like Kangba-Kangkhol, Kongkoi, Teima, Yangma, Tesharot, Urelkhuba, Urelhaoba, Irem Khabi and Langba. Langba gave birth to Moirang and Langte. Langte became a hill tribe, Moirang became the ruler.⁵² Further, Nganba decided to establish a village where he would construct his house and ultimately settled then. So he came down from Sarang Ching to the plains. And the place where he wanted to construct his house and raise a family was called Moirang (Moirang is the etymological blending of the words "Mongba Iran Yai means a house or family: Mongba and Iranyai were blended = Mongba + Iranyai. Moi + Ran (g) = Moirang). It was also known as Keke-Moirang.⁵³

However, some scholars⁵⁴ propounded a new theory rejecting the legendary origin of Moirang. According to them, Ngangoi, Kege and Moirang were different principalities established at different periods of history: they were different ethnic and linguistic groups. According to Ningthourol Lambuba, the first reference to Kege was during the reign of king Khongtekcha of Ningthouja dynasty. The Keges attacked the Meiteis but they were defeated by the forces of Khongtekcha under command of Thongak Lalpicha. 763 Keges were killed. However, the Cheitharol Kumbaba records that the Moirangs attacked the Meiteis and sixty three of them were killed. W.I. Singh opines that the Keges were already in occupation of the region which was later on known as Moirang principality. The Moirangs had not come down to the valley yet. According to him the Keges settled first at Ethai and then expanded to Ngangkha-Rawai. The Kege was the name given by the Meiteis to a group of inhabitants of Moriya principality located in the Kabaw valley of upper Burma. They gradually migrated to southern Imphal valley. The Kages were also known as Keke. They started mixing with the other tribes and ultimately amalgamated with the Moirangs. According to W.I. Singh, the Keges had linguistic connection with the Chinese. Silk culture was promoted by the Keges of Kabaw valley based on such terms like Kege teel (Kege worm = Silk worm). Kege plants were used for feeding Kege worm. According to him, the word Keke was derived from Khe, a name used by the Pong or Mau Shan to denote the Yunanese of China. Keges were the subject of the Moriya principality who migrated to south Imphal valley during the reign of Moriya Phambalcha.⁵⁵

According to this view, the Moirangs came from the south and east that the Keges are already a dispersed community without any

chiefdom or political organisation and the two groups were amalgamated. Before they were amalgamated, the Moirangs were descended from a group of Tibeto Burman tribes of upper Burma who moved into Manipur valley through Chin hills and the Kabaw valley. Moirang was derived from 'Mairan' called by the Marem to mean the land of the sun. Marem was a tribe who settled in the south western hills of Manipur. The Moirangs were not a homogenous but a mixture of different tribes.⁵⁶

W.I. Singh further points out that Moirang might have been connected with the Moran of upper Assam, based on a Moran tradition recorded by Endle⁵⁶ in his "Kacharis" that there were three brothers: Moilang, Moran and Moiram who lived in the upper reaches of the Chindwin river at Mongkong. Of the three brothers, Moilang remained at Hukong valley in upper Burma; the two brothers Moran and Moiram crossed the Patkai mountains and settled at Tipukh. Moran became the Moran tribe of upper Assam. It has been surmised by W.I. Singh that 'Moilang or Moirang came to the south and crossed the Chin Hills and came to south Manipur. This "Moilang" theory contradicts the theory of Moriya principality being shifted from Kabaw valley to south Manipur by Moriya Phambalcha who is regarded to have belonged to a very old line of rulers of Manipur, having started the calender of the Meiteis.⁵⁷

According to Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba, the Moirangs under chief deity and ruler Thangching Koirel Lai settled at Thangjing hills.⁵⁸ At that time, the Keges were in occupation of the flat plains in the west bank of the Loktak. When there was a political vacuum due to the absence of any ruler in the Kege land after the defeat at the hands of the Meiteis, Thangching came down to the plain at Ngangkha. The Keges led by Haomuba, son of Iraileima welcomed him and accepted him as their king. The Keges and Moirangs became an united people. Kege-Moirang become both the name of the land and the people inhabiting it.

Such a theory would dispute the commonly accepted concept that the Moirangs were one of the seven clans of the Meiteis, who were since the time of Pakhangba covered by the Salai or Yek system. They created myths and legends to show that they were descended from the same heavenly God who created men. Such a myth was popularised by the Ningthouja rulers that ultimately it was accepted by all sections of the Meitei society.

Territorial Extent of Moirang

The traditional geographical extent of Moirang was described by bards, specially, Khoidom and Mandom in their beautiful ballads as having included Ningthoukhong, Loktak lake, Thanga islets, sometimes, Lammangdong, and Khuman Yangba (which was at times, tributary to Moirang) in the north, the Turel Achouba or the Manipur river, Pumlen lake and its environments including Mondum and Lokkha-Haokha in the east, Matarok stream and its surrounding hills and Khuga river basin the west.⁵⁹ Moirang had traditionally: 1. Ngangkha Leikai, 2. Khoyol Leikai, 3. Nganglou Leikai, 4. Khambi Leikai, 5. Hega Leikai, 6. Okchin Leikai, 7. Chenglei Leikai and 8. Yaoshu Leikai, and there were nine markets, one in each village or Leikai in addition to the ninth one namely Khorl Keithel. Each of the markets was unique in the sale and purchase of particular items and commodities.⁶⁰

The capital of Moirang principality was perhaps established in several places. Thangjing Koirel Lai who was the founder and protector of the principality originally ruled at Thangjing Hills in the west. From there he came down to Ngankha where he was installed as king by the earlier inhabitants who worshipped him as god in a later period. The capital was shifted to Moirang Kangla proper. The capital of Moirang was surrounded by a moat, in the east by the Moirang river, in the west by the Thangbongtek river, in the south by a branch of the Moirang river, Keke Kaikhumbi Lokloyi, Numit Mamai Lunayi, Thabi Mamai Henna Yi the confluence of Lechelli, Laikhombi and Thangboktek. In the north was the Heiyenkhong stream and confluence of Thangbongtak and the Moirang river.⁶¹

Chronology and Geneology in the History of Moirang

Chronology has been the greatest drawback and geneology is the strongest point in the study of history of Manipur. Like the history of the Ningthoujas, the greatest weakness of the history of Moirang is the absence or near absence of chronology in an acceptable calendar. The *Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba*, a chronicle of Moirang, like its Ningthouja counterpart, *Ningthourol Lambuba* of the Meiteis does not give dates of the events and happenings. However, another chronicle named *Moirang Ningthourol* while being silent about the chronology gives the numbers of regnal years of the respective rulers.⁶² But the copy of this chronicle which was in the possession of a famous

astrologer of Moirang, Kenjengbam Haoba Singh gives the chronology according to Saka Era (Sakabda) though it is mentioned that the era of Kali was started in the reign of the first historical king.⁶³ This chronicle refers firstly to seven legendary rulers who were regarded as divine and mythical personalities, secondly, to thirty rulers during the period of independence of Moirang, and thirdly, to twenty four rulers who were appointed by the kings of Manipur after the subjugation of the principality till 1891 and two Moirang Ningthou appointed during the British period. The adoption of Saka Era in Moirang history is referred to by T.C. Hodson while he gives a brief account of the history of Moirang. But the use of Saka Era⁶⁴ in this particular chronicle of Moirang must have been after the subjugation of Moirang by the kingdom of Manipur and conversion into Hinduism. The Cheitharol Kumbaba also adopted both Kali Era or Kalyabda and Sakabda. This Era based on chronology of the Moirang kings was a later interpolation due to the influence of Hindu calendar adopted by the Hinduised court of Manipur in the eighteenth century onwards. This conclusion has been further strengthened by the absence of this chronology in other copies of Moirang Ningthourol.

The chronology of Moirang rulers after the Meitei conquest of Moirang in 1432 A.D. is more reasonable and reliable as the Cheitharol Kumbaba records the events in relation to the rulers of Moirang which had been included in the history of Manipur as a whole. But the pre-15th century chronology has been made by some scholars to establish the dates of few rulers by the method of contemporaneity of the rulers of the Ningthouja Khuman and the Moirang.⁶⁵ The problem is that the chronology of the Ningthouja kings before Loyamba of the twelfth century is extremely unreliable. One scholar hints at the beginning of Moirang history in tenth or eleventh century A.D.⁶⁶ however, the periodisation of the history of Moirang can be similar with that of Manipur. The Napachik excavation and the Salangthel megaliths have pointed to the existence of the neolithic culture and megalithic culture in Moirang. The seven rulers before Fang Fang Ponglenhanba can be established as historical personalities and the ancient period in Moirang history continued upto the middle of the fifteenth century when she lost her independence to Ningthouja kingdom. Again despite some variation, there are similarities in the later period between the Cheitharol Kumbaba and Moirang Ningthourol regarding the dates of events and the regnal years of the rulers.⁶⁷ The chronology has been reconstructed by Moirang based scholars, K. Matum in his *Moirang Kangla* (1969) and M. Nodiachand (1984).⁶⁸

Geneology of Rulers of Moirang with their Regnal Years

Legendary and Mythical.

1. Ngangningsing, 2. Hamsha, 3. Fang Liklai, 4. Yoiba, 5. Narong, 6. Mayamba and 7. Sunucha.

Historical and Independent Rulers

Number of Regnal years.

1. Fang Fang Ponglenghanba	40
2. Iwang Telheiba	50
3. Laiphangcheng	52
4. Ura Ngangoiba	55
5. Sana Rakhwa	51
6. Laiya Punshiba	61
7. Tushemba	40
8. Thangwai Kongding	50
9. Thingdi Nachaoba	60
10. Nungnang Tomba	49
11. Khkkei Lanthaba	37
12. Ura Kongyamba	41
13. Thiyang Michaoba	40
14. Kokwa Nunghuirang	48
15. Iwang Charanba	36
16. Thanga Ifan	41
17. Shangtol Khuba	45
18. Laiching Khu	41
19. Mashenba	42
20. Koirenba	50
21. Kaba Purang	65
22. Ithai Kairemba	41
23. Shangtol leinaota	31
24. Atellakki Loicha Ngamba	29
25. Chingphu Telheiba	55
26. Punshiba	72
27. Khongjamba	53
28. Yoirenba	49
29. Punshi Khurelchanba	69
30. Sanahongba (1381-32)	51

31. Interregnum : vacant (1432-56)	24
32. Khenjang Chaiba (1456-75)	19
33. Nanba Shareba (1475-14)	39
34. Haocharong Lanthaba (1514-57)	43
35. Kharoi Nai Telheiba (1557-97)	40
36. Amchi Lanthaba (1597-17)	20
37. Chingtareng Leishangba (1617-49)	32
38. Malang Taibi Aamba (1649-82)	33
39. Khokkei Talyamba (1682-13)	31
40. Khorì Shangtol Nau (1713-32)	19
Interregnum (1732-43)	
41. Khelli Nungnang (1743-67)	24
No king	6
42. Wayenba (1773-81)	8
43. Nameirakpam Medam Singh (1781-87)	6
44. Kongkhamacha kriti (1787-92)	5
45. Singjamba (1792-94)	2
46. Ramakanta (1794-02)	8
47. Amomcha Chaoba (1802-16)	14
48. Dharma Singh (1816-28)	12
49. Moirangthem Surja (1828-41)	13
50. Abeibam Tomba (1841-52)	11
Interregnum (1852-82)	30
51. Thongbiya Khagokpa (1882-88)	6
52. Sanahongba (1888)	6 (Six months)
Interregnum (1888- 92)	4
53. Moirangthem cha Ramananda (1892-1927)	35

Thangjing Koirel Lai

There is a strong belief that Thangjing Koirel Lai is the founder and protector of Moirang. Everything that happened in Moirang was his creation and his will. He was the royal deity of the kingdom of Moirang. But while an examination is made of the circumstances of his advent at Thangjing hills and Moirang as given in the chronicle, one is tempted to think that he was a historical king who was deified at a later stage and worshipped as the most important God of Moirang.

According to Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba,⁶⁹ Thangjing Koirel Lai was described as the godly king, the progenitor of clans and lineages, founder of years, chief of the heavenly gods, the goal of

human souls and the chief of the western region, the vanquisher of the Tripuris, one who travelled in Bengal (Pangan) and Mayang country on horse back, chief of Mahui, protector of the Mayang-Thongnang and controller of the Monthei.

Thangjing married Thangjing Koirel Leima. With regard to his origin, Thangjing Koirel Lai came down from the heaven and lived at his abode at Thangjing hills and later on settled at Ngangkha village. He was welcomed by a Kege leader named Haomuba, son of Iraileima with a newly born goat. Ngangkha village was earlier afforested by two men: Thonglen Haying Khongja and Khuyon Yangkhongjamba. And the village was already prosperous and populour with long rows of houses. There were seven barns of food grains, eight Leikais and nine markets. Rows of stone megaliths were raised from Khuyon to Khongyang.

This chronicle further records that Thangjing was the son of heavenly god "Soraren Awang Pakhang Yoirenba" who came in search of his mother Leimarel Ngangshabi and went on crying. He was pacified when he was offered a flora called Leishang. He came to Thangjing and settled at Khuyon and Ngangkha village. He was welcomed by Haomuba. Then this chronicle continues to state that after the creation of Ngangoi (Moirang) Soraren was invited to see the land and he was welcomed by his son Khorl Phaba. This episode was definitely an interpolation added later on to indicate that Moirang was colonized by the migrants from the north Imphal valley living around Koubu Hills.

The story of Thangjing Koirel Lai appears to be a reminiscence of an actual happening in Moirang.

The Legendary Rulers

1. Ngangningshing Atengba

Ngangningshing Atengba was the first of the so called divine rulers of Moirang who were historical personalities. He was regarded as a descendent of Thangjing Koirel Lai. He was the ruler of seven villages and he lived at Khuyon Leikai. He married Yaibi Leima daughter of Leinung Thongraiba, the just administrator of the Nganba clan. It is said that Thongraiba defeated Sarong Khoinucha.

2. Hamsha

Ngangningshing Atengba was succeeded by Hamsha Thaba who was described as beautiful as the white rice. His wife was Shangleima Taransu, the daughter of a warrior family.

3. Fang Liklai

Fang Liklai was the next ruler. (But Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba records that it was Fang Fang Ponglenhamba).

4. Yoiba

The next king was Yoiba or Puriklai Yoirenba who married Likyainu of Nganba clan whose ancestors Thongaiba Yimthangba defeated the Heirem, Akangyang and the Khunjan Makuyang.

5. Narong

Narong Lairisupa was a deeply religious king. He was a man of few words but he was a man of mild disposition and gave religious preachings to his people. His wife was Wahuinu of Nganba clan. Her father Thongai defeated Kana chief Masum Masongba over the issue of non payment of the bride price in form of cattle.

6. Mayampa

He was the next king. Puriklai Mayampa married Iriknu of Nganba clan.

7. Sunucha (Liklai Atenba)

Sunucha was the last of the so-called divine kings. He married Meira Ponjembi of the Angom clan. The king had contact with the Thongnang (Dimasa - Kachari) of Maibang and made a route to that country across the deep forests and stiff mountain ranges.

These seven rulers described were really historical personalities as clearly shown by the above account.

Historical Rulers**Fang Fang Ponglenghanba**

Fang Fang Ponglenghanbi or Fang Fang Atengba (according to Moirang Nigthoural Lambuba) was the first important king of Moirang. He was called Fang Fang as he was born at sun-rise. He was a military conqueror. He sent a military expedition towards the western hills and destroyed Haorengkok tribal village. The Moirang forces burnt down the whole village and captured Haoreng Koiba, the chief of the village. His territory extended from Thangashoi in the east and Haoreng in the west. The chronicle records an interesting quarrel between the two women, Hangba Yaiheibi and Khaibi Yaitambi over a precious stone with magical power. In course of the quarrel Khaibi Yaitambi was killed by Langba Yaiheibi. Her son Chakharangba Pongchongba came in search of his dead mother and wanted to kill the killer of his mother. The husband of Langba Yaiheibi was a priest with occult power. He intervened and revived the dead woman. The chronicle also records another incident in which Seven Spirits known as Langba Yakhangloi were trying to create a natural calamity by destroying Khuyol Leikai and produced a lot of noise. On enquiry, king Fang Fang Ponglenghanba came to know of the activities of the spirits and summoned a priest named Mori, the wise to propitiate the spirits and restore Khuyol village. Mori worshipped Langba, the god who passed on the hymns to pacify the spirits and restore Khuyol village. Accordingly a bull was sacrificed, the Khuyon land was restored and repaired, and the people became prosperous and happy again.

He constructed a hall of coronation. The Kangla was constructed in the capital of the kingdom. The building was decorated with the trophies of game and war.

Fang Fang invaded the Kharam village of Langte which was burnt down and defeated Langhan, a Kharam warrior. Those who were taken prisoners were beheaded and their heads were buried. Conquest of Kharam village of Langte was the beginning of the Moirang conflict with the hill tribes of the western hills.

There was an unusual occurrence of "social and physical freeze" in Moirang. When the people were just lethargic: youth and girls did not smile, the children did not cry, the dogs did not bark, no cock did crow. The king's daughter Thangyai Leihonbi enquired after this unnatural social phenomenon. A priest named Thingkol Moribacha was

consulted by the king to find out the reason. The priest after divination revealed that the king had forgotten to perform rites and sacrifices to God Thangjing for prosperity. Immediately all the rites and rituals were performed according to the instruction of God Thangjing. Normalcy of life was thus restored.

Fang Fang Ponglenhanba married a Khuman girl named Mentomnu. According to Moirang Ningthourol he had a reign of eighty years.⁷⁰

Iwang Telheiba

Iwang Telheiba was the next ruler. His reign was a period of further territorial conquest and military conquest specially in the hill region of the trans-Leimatak basin. He invaded Nungtek village of the Puimei tribe (Kabui) to the north of Leimatak and Ijei basin. Nungpulaiba, the chief of Nungtek was defeated. The king got the title of "Nungtek Lanthaba." He also sent an expedition to the southern side, may be the Lokkha-Haokha village.

He had two queens: Laiwa Leima Kongtingnu and Leima Nungonsu. The first queen gave birth to Laiphacheng and the second wife had two sons: Chauba Shaopan Ngamba and Lokpa Laipa.

According to tradition, Pakhangba after being defeated by Khaba Nungjengba fled to Moirang and sought political assylum. He spent a long time as a political refugee. Pakhangba had two sons while in Moirang: Khamba Mungyang Chaoba and Tangkrumiba. When his sons grew into youth, with the help of the son of Iwang Telheiba, by his second queen Chaoba Shonpon Ngamba, Pakhangba invaded Kangla in north Imphal valley and defeated Khaba Nungjengba and restored himself to the throne of Kangla.⁷¹ If this tradition is correct, Iwai Telheiba was a contemporary of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba. But we are not sure of the chronology of the two rulers.

Iwang Laikacheng Atengba or Laiphangcheng

Laiphangcheng (or Iwang Laikacheng Atengba of Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba)⁷² was the eldest son of Iwang Telheiba by his first queen. Early in his reign, he invaded Lambui and Youkok villages. He defeated Nungshan, the chief of Lambui. He was described as Lambui Lanthaba (conqueror of Lambui). His raid on Lambui is significant that Lambui is a Tangkhul village in the east bank of the Thoubal river in Ukhrul. Laiphangcheng also extended Moirang power by invading, in

the west, the village of Khuroi which was the place settled by Lamleksang, a Khaba noble. But Khuroi was not a well populated village. He also invaded Songbu village⁷³ which was totally destroyed.

If the Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba is to be believed, Laiphangcheng married Wangamlon Tampa or Naoremton, daughter of the Meitei king Ura Konthouba.⁷⁴ He was the contemporary of the said Meitei king who was the father of Naothingkhong. This reference in the chronicle to the marriage of the daughter of Ura Konthouba to Laiphangcheng contradicts the tradition of refuge taken by Pakhangba at Moirang who was helped by Chauba Shaupon Ngamba, the half-brother of Laiphangcheng. he had a reign of fifty five years.

Ura Khundaba: Moirang- Khuman Alliance

After the death of Laiphangcheng, his son Ura Ngangoiba or Ura Khundaba ascended the throne of Moirang. According to Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba, Ura Khundaba was named after the name of his maternal grand father Ura Konthouba, the Meitei king. Ura Khundaba was deeply religious man. He devoted himself to the worship of gods and goddesses of Moirang and performance of the traditional rites and rituals.

There is a reference to a fight between Moirang and the Chothes. He fought with the Chothes of Naharam of the western hills. The Chothe chief was defeated and taken prisoner. The king himself participated in the battle and showed his dexterity in the use of weapons. The reference to the defeat of the Chothe is a historical confirmation of the tradition of the Chothes that they migrated to the present habitat in south east Manipur hills through the hills west of Manipur.

After the defeat of the Chothes, Ura Khundaba invaded the village; of Laokha-Haokha which were situated in the southern part of the kingdom as the inhabitants stopped paying tributes to Moirang and Khuman. So Ura Khundaba and the Khuman chief Chingkhong Thongraiba made an alliance to send a joint military expedition against Lokkha Haokha. A large number of Moirang and Khuman soldiers under the command of their respective kings sailed down in large boats (each boat carrying ⁵¹ soldiers) and defeated Lokkha and Haokha. Lokkha chief Yengaoba was taken prisoner.

There was a serious tension of war between Luwang chief Phantek Shoknaiba of Lamlangtong (Lammangdong: Bishnupur) and Khuman

chief Chingkhong Thongraiba who discovered a conspiracy engineered by the former to assassinate him when he was invited to attend a feast of merit at Lammangdong. The Khuman chief escaped to his principality and summoned all his nobles and soldiers to invade Lammangdong to punish the arrogant and conspiratorial chief who happened to be his son-in-law.⁷⁵ The Luwang chief was greatly frightened at the war preparation of the Khuman chief. He sent emissaries with presents to king Ura Khundaba for military help in fighting against the Khumans. The Khuman chief also sent his noble Thongamba to Ura Khundaba seeking help for the invasion of the Luwang principality. Ura Khundaba was at a dilemma at the simultaneous request from two neighbouring chiefs. When he was in a fix, his young son opened the baskets of sweetmeats presented by the Khuman chief. Queen Laisnaba told the king that God Thangjing had indicated his advice through the action of young prince to accept the request of Khuman chief. So king Ura Khundaba and Khuman chief Chingkhong Thongraiba invaded Lammangdong on the bank of the Thongjao river. The Khumans defeated the Luwang forces. Ura Khundaba defeated a Luwang commander, Heisangloi in the battle. The Luwang principality was greatly weakened by this joint invasion which was brought forth by the unwise conspiracy to kill the Khuman chief.

Moirang king sent a Lambu ⁷⁶ named Thongai Yangkhuba to collect tribute from Lokkha village. In an incident the Lokkha chief died in unnatural circumstances. The Moirang Lambu was suspected of killing him. So the Lambu was chased by the Lokkha soldiers. The Lambu fled to Moirang. For the ill treatment of this Lambu, the Moirang forces once again invaded Lokkha-Haokha villages. Prisoners including one Tondou and a virgin girl called Shangde Ngainubi were captured. The girl was presented to the king. Later on this young queen was presented by the king to one Khaichen Ahanba. But Khaichen Ahanba was killed by his younger brother. His wife reported the murder to the king and requested him to conquer Kongyang village where the brother lived. This raid was carried out. After the victory over Kongyang village, there was a singing competition between the Khuman and Moirang singers in which Moirang was defeated by the Khuman team. It was followed by a boating competition in which the two rulers participated. The Moirang boatmen defeated their Khuman counterparts. Thus Ura Khundaba greatly extended the territory of Moirang and his political authority was felt by the Luwang and the surrounding hill tribes.

The king married two queens. The first queen was Chinphurol Sanalembi and the second queen was Moibi Leima Thimoi Langbam Chanu. He had a very long reign of fifty five years.

Sana Rakhwa

Sana Rakhwa was successor of Ura Khundaba. During his invasion to Sarung village, one Moirang noble Khuchup Cheimiyang was killed and his head was kept hanging in a branch of a tree by the warriors of the village. According to Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba in the dream of a woman of Khunjan lineage Cheimiyang revealed that due to neglect the bamboo grove planted by Khuyon Loklouremba, gradually declined resulting in the weakening of the Moirang royalty. Khuyon Loklouremba's family became almost extinct — as the last of the Khuyons, Khuyon Haoba, an orphan was living a wretched life, without any cloth in a desolate hut in the Loktak lake. In her dream, the king was directed to clean off the neglected bamboo grove near the Thangjing. It was reported to the king. And accordingly Khuyon Haoba, the poor, was summoned from the hideout. He was given proper clothing. The bamboo grove was sanctified by the king with the help of Khuyon Haoba who was directed by the king to maintain and protect the grove from the ravages of pigs and cattle. After the restoration of the said "Bamboo grove", the Moirang kingdom became prosperous and people were happy. Khuyon Haoba also became a rich man with the grace of king Sana Rakhwa.

Sana Rakhwa married Yaibilik. In Naothing Khong Phambal Kaba, the Meitei prince was said to have married a Moirang peincess, daughter of Sana Rakhwa. NaothingKhong was the son of Urakonhouba whose daughter was married to Laiphacheng of Moirang whose grandson was Sanarakhwa. We have indicated that the marriage episode between Naothing Khong and Moirang princess was a later interpolation in Naothingkhong Phambal Kaba.⁷⁷ Sana Rakhwa ruled for fifty one years.

Leiya Punshiba

Sana Rakhwa had two sons: Leiya Punshiba and Sanahongba. Leiya Punshiba succeeded his father. He was a deeply religious king. His devotion to religion did not detract him from his military activities. He sent a military expedition towards the southern side of his kingdom.

The expedition raided a Lamgang village which was totally destroyed. The villagers were scattered. Those persons who were in matrilineal residence at Lamgang were rescued by the invading forces. Lamgang is a tribe of Chandel district. The king returned victorious. After many years of royal coronation and successful rule, king Punshiba was unhappy as no child was born to the queen. Once the king performed a bamboo planting rite near Phuballa. Since then the queen was blessed with a son. His queen was Yoirumlon Ingen Chanu, daughter of chief of Yangoi, named Langmeniba. He is accorded a very long reign of sixty one years.

Tusempa

Leiya Punshiba left behind two sons by two queen, Tusempa and Chang Leinaita. Tusempa ascended the throne of Moirang. He was a warrior king who invaded Loisha village and captured Shengkuplen, the chief of Loisha village. But the king was a deeply religious person. He abdicated the throne of Moirang in favour of his younger brother, Thongri Nachaoba. His queen was Leima Nongthi Tarengbi. Tusempa ruled for forty years only.

Konting Hanba

The next ruler was Kongtinghanba or Khangwai Konding. Tusempa had no issue. So Kongting Hanba, son of Muwa Sana, younger brother of Sana Rakhwa was made to ascend the throne. He is said to have ruled fifty years.

Thingkri Nachaoba: Fight with Koireng and Chothe tribes

Konting Hanba who was also known as Chothe Thanwai Pakhangba. His reign was marked for fight against the Koireng and Chothe tribes. He sent a military expedition to Koireng village at Khungunching in Thangjing hills. The village was destroyed; the houses were burnt. The boys dormitory of the Koireng village was also destroyed. The Koireng chief, Nungangchung who was fully armed with a spear in hand, shield over the chest, the hide of the bear covering his body, his arms and legs fully covered and decorated, was defeated by Thingkri Nachaoba. Since this successful raid, the king was given the title of "Koireng Lanthaba" (conqueror of the Koireng). The king also invaded

the Chothe village of Nungak. There were two streams running in this village, namely Tusamphai and Tuisareng. A portion of the hill range was called Liwangtong, the other was called Meshangtong where once a noble man of Thongnang (Bodo Kachari) Kauba was captured. The Chothe village was conquered by Thingkri Nachaoba. The king plucked a flower which could stand the rains, heat of summer and frosts of winter known as Kharam Leishak Angangba and presented this beautiful flower to queen Sunurimbi. On her request the flower was exclusively reserved for the queen and any commoner plucking it or decorating it was banned. The flower was named after the queen. The king further continued the expedition towards Sugnu in the south. Ashong village with chief Selik was defeated. He also conquered Nachou Lammahal beyond Oknarel and Thongarel. He had a reign of sixty years.

Nungnang Tomba and Iwai Khokkei Lanthaba

Nungnang Tomba continued the policy of expansion followed by the previous rulers. During his reign he invaded a Khuman village named Leitang Yumaikon Lalbi Paobitok. One slave Hawaiba was taken as prisoner. The battle was celebrated by a Victory Feast. His marriage with Chingjarembi of Konthoujam family whose territory covered Nambol, Leimram, Moidangpok which were known as Lanloi gave him the political influence.

He was succeeded by Iwang Khokkei Lanthaba. He married Leiphomlangbi. His reign also was a period of military expansion in south and west Manipur valley. His attention was turned towards the Loijing Phou-Oiching in Rongmei country to the west of Leimtak River. A Moirang tradition records that this range was settled by the Meitei/Moirang goddess of Paddy, Phou-Oibi and her six friends when they wanted to go to the Thongnang country. The present name of Phou-Oiching is Laimaton Phourungba and there is an abode of Rongmei god of paddy named Napsinmei at the top of this hill. Ura kongyamba raided Nungshai village, inhabited by the Rongmeis and defeated Langmaiba, the Nungshai chief. The king got the title of the conqueror of Kalrei Nungshai.

Once Moirang Kanamba was captured by the chief of Heirem Khunjan. Moirang king invited Chingchareng, the chief of Hairem Khunjan to a feast of merit at Moirang. The son of Kanamba provoked the Heirem Khunjan chief who retorted that he was a great warrior who

killed Kanamba. The son reported the matter to the king about the disclosure by the Khunjan chief and sought his permission to take revenge for the murder of his father. Some time later, the Heirem Khunjan chief was killed by the son of Kanamba on his return journey, with the tacit support from the Moirang king. Thus Heirem Khunjan came under the influence of Moirang.

Thiwang Michaoba, Conqueror of Shan village

Ura Kongyamba was succeeded by Thiwang Michaoba who raided a Kharam village and defeated their chief Senpu. He celebrated the victory with a big feast. The chronicle records that he invaded a Shan village of Pantha in Kabaw valley. Pantha village was completely destroyed and Shan chief of the village was thus defeated. It was the indicator of the rising power of the kingdom of Moirang. He married Chingkhurenbi of the Ngamba clan. He ruled for forty years.

Kokwa Nunghuireng Atengba and Charamb :

Conquest of Moyon tribe

Son of the first queen of Thiwang Michaoba, Khokwa Nunghuireng married Ponchenbi. He conquered a hill village, Kadang in Leimatak. He was succeeded by Charan Yoi Liklai Atengba popularly known as Charamba. His achievement was the invasion and conquest of Moyon tribe in the south east. Moyon was a tribe in the hills south east of Imphal valley. It was a very old tribe who was referred to in Poireiton Khunthokpa according to which Poireiton the colonising adventurer and his wife Leinaotabi visited the Moyon tribal village. The Moirang forces under Charamba destroyed the village. As usual the houses were burnt and a large number of warriors were killed. The Moirang king personally participated in the campaign and defeated the Moyon chief Kamjaoba. Thirtysix years of reign were assigned to him.⁷⁸

Thanga Ifen Lanthaba

During the reign of Thanga Ifen Lanthaba, the eastward move of Moirang military might was continued. And the Tangkhul village of Loutei was defeated.

He also fought against the Khuman, the eastern neighbour of Moirang in order to take revenge of the murder of a youth of Moirang

by some Khuman warriors. The sister of the deceased youth requested the king to take action against the Khuman. Moirang forces were sent out. In the naval battle at Loktak, the Khuman noble Tonba was killed and the Khumans were defeated. The strength of Moirang got extended over her neighbours.

The chronicle records the digging of a canal to drain away the excess water from the Loktak lake. Thus Nongangkong was dug to connect Loktak with Khordak river. He had a reign of fortyone years.

Sangdom Khuba and Lai Ching khu (Ura Telheiba)

Sangdon Khumba had an uneventful reign except invasion of two tribal villages, Haorei in the south and Nungtek in the north.

He was succeeded by Laiching Khu Ura Telheiba whose reign was engaged in the establishment of Moirang's political supremacy in the east. The chronicle records that he invaded Monshang tribal village and defeated the Monshang village chief Thakupleng. He married Yaoreima but did not have any issue. He had forty one years of reign.

Masemba, Koiremba and Kaba Purang

Masemba's connection with Ura Telheiba was not known, though the Moiranglon indicated that he was his son. Masemba invaded Sachung village which was an old village as it was referred to in Poireiton Khunthokpa. One Seitakleng of the village was taken prisoner. He had two wives: Leihanmombi and Manouchanu. Manouchanu was a Ningthouja princess. Masemba was assigned a reign of forty two years.

Koirel Ningthouba or Koiremba was the son of the Meitei princess Monouchanu and ascended the throne after the death of his father. He invaded Tangkang village, probably inhabited by the Marings near Meiringching to the east of Heirok. The village chief Amo Shanglei was taken prisoner.

Koiremba did not have any child. So his younger brother by another mother Kaba Purang Ningthouba was made to ascend the throne of Moirang. His accession created a feeling of fear and anxiety in the mind of the people as he was more devoted to his queen Leima Uyan Leima than to the affairs of the kingdom. His sister-in-law, queen of Koiremba objected to his neglect of the state affairs by Kaba Purang. But the poor king told her that he could not part with his wife for the hardship of kingship and abdicated the throne in favour of Ithai

Kairemba with his sister-in-law herself as the queen. He announced his decision in a public gathering summoned for the purpose. He spent his later days at Karang Mapithel in deep meditation.

Ithai Kairemba

By an accident of fate, Ithai Kairemba succeeded his elder brother and administered the country properly. He demanded tributes from Ngaikhong of a live tiger or a boat and personal presence in Moirang court. The chief of Naikhong sent his son and a boat. Ithai Kairemba was annoyed at this and killed the son of Ngaikhong chief. The place where the young man was killed was called Ningthoukhong.

The queen invited all the people of Moirang at a community feast for social familiarity and harmonious relation. The queen took initiative to build up Ngangkha village which was deserted. Moirang became prosperous and peaceful with plentiful harvests and digging of canals for providing irrigation facilities. The queen who participated actively in state affairs was Phairou Ponjembi.

Shangtol Leinaota

He was the son of Ithai Kairemba. He defeated the Aimon chief. He also invaded Phoiing, Phou-Oiching and defeated the Shongbu villages.

In the east, he invaded Tammu in Kabaw valley, which was destroyed by the Moirang forces. A Shan leader called Lushei was captured. Then he invaded the Khuman country by boats. The Khuman chief Adon Punshiba made a counter offensive on the Moirang forces which retreated. In the naval battle in Loktak lake the Moirang king was killed by the Khuman forces. The people of Moirang were shocked. They planted banana plants in honour of the departed king.

Shonglen Lanthaba (Loichangamba): Conflict with the Khumans

Shonglen Lanthaba ascended the throne of Moirang in a very critical period of history as his father was killed by the Khumans. The Khumans were greatly encouraged at their unexpected victory over the tactless Moirang king. So they invaded Moirang at Chinampok. Loichangamba who was fired with a burning desire to avenge the death of his father summoned all his people to decide the issue. An

unanimous decision was made to fight and defeat the Khumans. A big Moirang force attacked the Khumans at Shanglen Pankhokpok in Loktak lake with great ferocity and without any reservation. The Moirang attack was repulsed but they made a counter attack. The Khumans cracked and fled from the battlefield. The Moirang forces chased them and killed a Khuman country at Ikop. For his victory over the Khumans, at Shonglen, the king was renamed Shonglen Lanthaba.

Adon Punshiba, the Khuman chief was now threatened by the Moirangs in the west and by the Shans (Kabaws) in the east. He sought the help of his father-in-law king Khumomba of the Ningthouja kingdom. A battle was fought between Khuman-Meitei forces against the Kabaw-Moirang forces. Moirang defeated the Khumans at Loicha. So Shonglen Lanthaba was renamed Loichangamba.

Loichangamba invaded a Kharam village of Ningshong whose chief Yimpirang was taken prisoner.

Chingkhu Telheiba

Laichangamba was succeeded by Chingkhu Telheiba. According to Moirang Kangleiron,⁷⁹ Chingkhu Telheiba had a vigorous reign. The king went on hunting to Yaorou. He caught one Bengal royal tiger which was tied with ropes and brought to the capital. The place where the tiger was bound was known as Keibul (Kei = Tiger, = bul = binding) Lammahan. It was a floating swamp, the home of the Sangai, the brow antlered deer of Moirang. According to this chronicle, there was drought in Moirang during his reign. Queen Tolbi got her nails infected with boils while working at the hard and dry fields. The people requested king Telheiba to perform the necessary rites and rituals for the worship of god to send rains in the land. King Telheiba summoned the whole people at the royal palace and directed the priests to perform the rain rituals in all places of worship in the principality of Moirang. Then, the rain came down, Moirang Kangleiron says, "the rains poured down from the darkened sky as if flowing down from the big jars of water."⁸⁰ The trees and the forests were uprooted, the country side was flooded, the deers and birds had no place to stay.

It is believed that during the reign of Chingkhu Telheiba the epic of Khambi-Thoibi originated out of a romantic episode of between princess Thoibi, the beautiful daughter of Telheiba's younger brother prince Chingkhu Yaima Telheiba ⁸¹ and Khamba an orphan son of a former noble of the king. Khamba-Thoibi epic grew out of this

episode. Their romance ended in their marriage after a lot of trials and tribulations. But the story had a tragic ending as Khamba was speared to death by mistake by his wife princess Thoibi who also committed suicide herself. The story of Khamba and Thoibi is one of the great cultural and folk traditions of Moirang and Manipur. It reveals a well developed, beautiful, cultured and civilised Moirang, the feudal social system, the might and power of the Moirang state, the economic prosperity of Moirang and the human and moral values of Moirang society.³²

There is another theory that the Khamba-Thoibi epic was based on the marriage of Yoiren Tompokpi, a Moirang princess and a Meitei king Yoirenba (Yoiren Tompokpa) which has no relevance to the Moirang tradition. Cheitharol Kumbaba says that Yoiren Tompokpi was the daughter of Chingkhutelheiba. There is some confusion over this. Chingkhutelheiba's reign of forty one years appears to have reached the climax of the glory of Moirang.

Successors of Telheiba: Punshiba, Ura Khongchomba, Yoirenba and Punshi Khurel Chanba

Chingkhutelheiba had two sons, Ngangoi Punshiba and Sanaba but no daughter. Ngangoi Punshiba succeeded him according to the Moiranglon³³ though in the folk tradition Chingkhutelheiba did not have any child. Perhaps he ruled in the twelfth century and beginning of the thirteenth century A.D. Punshi Khurel Chanba became the king of Moirang. Punshi Khurel Chanba had four sons by three wives: Sanahongba, Khelleipanpa, Urakhonghal and Yaoshurakpa. Sanahongba became the king. As to the chronology, it has been prepared by some scholars that Khongjomba had a reign of fifty years, Yoirenba, forty nine years, Khurel Chanba, sixty nine years and Sanahongba, fifty one years.

Sanahongba: Conquest of Moirang by Ningthouja king Ningthou Khomba

In the beginning of the fifteenth century, Moirang had reached the climax of her power which also coincided with the growth of the Meitei state under the Ningthouja dynasty. Moirang under Sanahongba was a powerful principality. Ningthouja king Punshiba (1404-32) invaded several times. The Cheitharol Kumbaba records that he invaded

Moirang at Soibung and captured Lammachau. No date of the invasion was of course recorded. But in 1432 A.D. according to N. Khelchandra⁸⁴, king Punshiba was killed by Moirang. It was perhaps the greatest achievement of Moirang in the face of the rising power of the Meitei kingdom. The Ningthouja had subjugated all the clan principalities. The death of Punshiba, conquest of Moirang by Ningthou Khomba and death of Sanahongba occurred in 1432 A.D. However, according to Ngangoicha Nodia who quoted Moirang Kangleiron⁸⁵ Sanahongba died a few years after the conquest of Moirang by Ningthou Khomba. The year 1432, marked the end of the independence of Moirang.

It is said that Ningthou Khomba, before his invasion of Moirang, sent one Namoi Khundangba who tried to create disunity and destabilisation in Moirang. A plot was hatched at his behest to foment enmity between Sanahongba and his half brother Yaoshurakpa, born of the third queen of his father king Punshi Khurel Chanba. Taking advantage of the disunity in Moirang, Ningthou Khomba invaded Moirang and defeated Sanahongba. Cheitharol Kumbaba records that the invasion of Moirang was successful and a number of Moirang nobles were brought as prisoners to the Ningthouja capital. There is no mention of the killing or capture of the Moirang king; a big event must have been recorded. So what Ngangoicha Nodia says that Sanahongba died a few years after the invasion may be accepted as reasonable.

With the defeat of Sanahongba, the Ningthouja king conquered Moirang. The conquest of Moirang also completed the process of integration of the regional principalities into the kingdom of Manipur. It also marked the end of the independent status of Moirang. However, one should remember that the rule of the independent kings of Moirang who were proud of their rich cultural legacy and who not only jealously defended their political autonomy but extended their territory throughout southern Manipur from Bishnupur to the border of Tripura kingdom which covered the Cachar valley, and from Khuga river basin to Tammu in the Kabaw valley, was one of the brightest period in the history of Moirang. But the Meitei kingdom was a rising power. Therefore in the fifteenth century Moirang was not able to withstand the pressure exerted by this rising power in the north. After their subjugation, Moirang king was given a status of tributary chief. This conquest was also a great landmark in the cultural and social history of Manipur as it led to the enrichment of the culture and civilisation of Manipur as a whole. Moirang was a cradle of human civilisation and cultural creativity.

Moirang under the Suzerainty of Ningthouja Kings (1457 - 1891)

The history of Moirang after 1432 was a part of the history of Manipur under the suzerainty of the Ningthouja kings. Though she accepted the tributary status, Moirang continued to maintain her cultural and religious identity which led to the continuation of the feudal paraphernalia of Moirang. The territory of Moirang was well defined. The temple of Lord Thangjing was the heart and soul of the religious and cultural life of the people of Moirang; all their activities were centered around Lord Thangjing who was the presiding royal deity and protector of the king and the people. The cultural base was so strong that their literary, artistic expression, specially dance and music, the feudal structure, rites and rituals of the nobility and kingship were maintained in the organisation and maintenance of the temple of Thangjing. If the Kangla was the heart and soul of the Meitei religion, culture and polity, Lord Thangjing and his temple were the motive force and nerve centre of Moirang culture and religion. Moirang continued to maintain her powerful cultural autonomy throughout her long history.

Khenjang Chaiba (1456 - 75)

After 1432, there was no king of Moirang for 24 years. Moirang king Sanahongba fled to Haokha Menkhom and died there. His eldest son Khenjang Chaiba fled to the west, most probably Tripura kingdom, another son Kachung Chaiba fled and hid himself among the Chakpas and another son Liklai Khwa hid among the Meiteis⁸⁴ The country was deserted and in complete chaos. So king Ningthou Khomba sent his younger brother as the king of Moirang, but due to the resistance from the people he could not enter the capital of Moirang. According to tradition, as directed by Lord Thangjing, Khenjang Chaiba was recalled from the west and appointed the king of Moirang (Moirang Ningthou) by the king of the Meitei. Khenjang Chaiba held the office for 19 years.

Nonglen Haibikhong (Nanba Saraba) (1475-1514)

“Nonglen Haibikhong Nanba Saraba became Moirang Ningthou (Moirang chief) during the reign of Kiyamba (1467 - 1508). Kiyamba invited Nanba Saraba to help him administer the country. He gave

assistance to Kiyamba during the conquest of Kabaw valley. He ruled the kingdom for thirty nine years.

Haochong Lanthaba (1514-57) was Moirang Ningthou in the royal court of king Lamkai Nyambo (1517 - 23) and looked after the pana of Naharup and other panas. He was followed by Kharoinai Telheiba (1557-97), then Amchi Lanthaba (1597-1717), Chingtang Leishang a (1617-49) and Malang Taiba (1649-82).⁸⁷

Khokkhei Lalyamba (1682-1713)

Khokkhei Lalyamba participated in the military expedition of king Paikhomba during his conquest of Tusuk and Kharam villages. In this expedition he rescued the life of Paikhomba.

Khokkhei Lalyamba was followed by Khorì Shangtol Nao (1713 - 32). After him king Garibaniwaza did not appoint anybody as Moirang Ningthou for eleven years (1732- 43). Then came Khellei Nungnang Telheiba (1743 - 67) who was the most famous king of Moirang in the eighteenth century. Under him Moirang revolted against the king of Manipur. He had his capital at Kwakta. Taking advantage of the Burmese invasion of Manipur, taking the Burmese help, he became the king of Manipur. The revolt of Moirang under Khellei Nungnang Telheiba will be discussed later on. After the death of this king, the Moirang chiefs were Wayenba(1773 - 81), Madan Singh (1781 - 87), Kongkhamcha Kriti (1787 - 92), Shingjamba (1792-94), Ramkanta (1794 - 1802), Achomcha Chauba (1802 - 16) Dharma Singh (1816 - 28), Moirangthem Sarya (1828-41), Aheibamcha Tomba (1841 - 52). There was vacancy for thirty years (1852 - 82), during the reign of Chandrakriti Singh, Thongbiya Khangokpa (1882 - 88), Sanahongba (Six months in 1888), then vacancy (1888 - 92), Moirangthem Ramananda (1892 - 1927). These "Moirang Ningthous" were appointed by the Meitei kings upto 1888 and after 1891, by the British. Ramananda was appointed "Moirang Ningthou" by Major Maxwell, the Political Agent. He was given a guard of honour by fifty police and five guns.

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72. **Moirang Ningthourol Lambuba, p. 44.**
73. **Songbu was the name given to the Rongmei (Kabui) of Manipur.**
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7

Expansion of the Kingdom of Manipur: Kyamba to Paikhomba

In the middle of the fifteenth century, the strength of the Meitei state was reflected in the military aggrandisement and territorial expansionism. The whole valley of Manipur, except the autonomous principality of Moirang was brought under the direct rule of the Ningthoujas. The hill tribes, especially the southern Tangkhuls, the Marings and other small tribes living in the mountain ranges dividing Manipur valley and the Chindwin basin were brought under their political control to ensure safety and security to the routes between Manipur valley and upper Burma which were used both for trade and military purposes. The hill tribes who lived in the forest clad Koubru mountain, and upper reaches of the Imphal and Iril rivers and more or less accepted the tributary status, thus providing access for the Meitei state to the natural resources of the forests, hills and rivers strengthened the agricultural economy and military infrastructure of the country. During the period the boundaries of the Meitei kingdom reached the Kabaw Valley in the west bank of the Chindwin. The credit for the military and territorial expansion of the kingdom was rightly given to king Ningthoukhomba and his illustrious son Kyamba who was a worthy son of a worthy father and equally colourful mother, Linthoingambi, the warrior queen of Manipur's history.

Kyamba the Conqueror of Kabaw Valley

Thangwai Ningthouba which was the earlier name of Kyamba ascended the throne in 1467 A.D. at the age of 24 years. With the beginning of

the reign of this remarkable king who started the keeping of the royal chronicle known as the *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, the task of reconstructing the history of Manipur has become comparatively easy and authentic. Supplemented by a large number of relevant literatures history of Manipur has taken a reliable shape.

Conquest of Kabaw Valley

The new king's fame and power were spread beyond the confines of his mountain kingdom whose capital was located in the heart of the valley of Manipur. It was due to the high respect for Manipur's power and influence that the king of the Shan Kingdom of Pong in upper Burma proposed to the young king to participate in a joint military expedition in the trans-Chindwin basin which was the home of several Shan principalities.¹ The Shans of upper Burma or the Shan states proper were generally known to the Meiteis as Pongs and the Shans of the Chindwin basin were known as the Kabaws. Kabaw was the name of the ethnic group and the valley inhabited by them. According to Pong Meitei Lamyen Lairik, it was agreed that both the forces of Manipur and the Pong would come to an appointed place for the expedition when the orchid, *Khongan Melei* bloomed. The orchid flowered one month earlier in Pong and one month later in Manipur. Therefore the forces of Manipur came one month late. However the joint forces of Manipur and Pong invaded the Shan principalities in the Chindwin basin in 1470 A.D. during the third year of the reign of Thangwai Ningthouba who was 27 years old. *Khekkhomba* was the Sawbwa or the king of Pong and he was forty seven years old. The chronicles of Manipur record that the joint forces invaded Kyang, a Shan principality in the Kabaw Valley.² On his way across the present Tengnoupal hills, the chronicle records, Ningthouba performed sacrifice of a mithun for the victory of his military expedition.³ Kyang was a principality which was associated with the colonizing adventures of Poireiton and his wife *Leinaotabi* who tried to raise piggery and dog rearing in this place.⁴ In the invasion of Kyang, Ningthouba showed his strength and courage; he defeated Kyang. Its chief *Chaosengba* was captured along with other female members of his family.

The victory over Kyang was celebrated by renaming king Ningthouba as *Kyamba*, the conquerer of Kyang. It was followed by a big festivity in which the king of Pong and *Kyamba* participated. According to the writer of *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, a silvery bridge of 600

ft. wide was constructed over the Chindwin river and the two rulers made a ceremonial crossing of the bridge. They also sat on the golden thrones placed on a golden mat, ate on a single golden plate and drank water from a golden vessel.⁵ They also exchanged their servants. The Pong king presented a mouth organ player to Kyamba in exchange of a drummer named Sekta.⁶

Fixing the Boundary Between Manipur and Pong

The two kings were very friendly and they concluded a treaty of friendship which fixed the boundary between Manipur and Pong. Cheitharol Kumbaba gives the boundary in very clear terms: in the north east Mungkhong Mungyang was for Manipur and the land of the dwarf mango groves was for Pong; in the east, it was upto Loijiri hills, in the south upto Miyotong: Regarding Shamjok (Thaungdut), the eastern portion was for Pong and the western portion was for Manipur.⁷ The major portion of Kabaw Valley was annexed to Manipur. It was the first treaty concluded between Manipur and a foreign sovereign power which was recorded in the chronicles and the Pong Meitei Lamyen Lairik (An accord of the distribution of territories between Pong and the Meitei)⁸. This was the international recognition of the kingdom of the Meiteis by a power in upper Burma. The kingdom of Manipur was a full fledged sovereign country with internal and external independence in the true sense of the term.

Expedition to Tribal Villages

Kyamba went out in military expedition in the hill areas. He raided the Liangmei village of Makhan, located in the Koubru range and defeated the chief of Makhan named Loithang and a warrior called Achon was captured as prisoner. In the west, he had contacts with the Kabuis (Rongmei) in the Ijei river basin. The Ningthourol Lambuba refers to the death of a poor Rongmei girl by starvation as she could not cross the flooded Ijei river. Then he defeated the village of Chapung and captured its chief Karengkham Maipak. In the north, he raided the village of Chingsong which was earlier a tributary to the Meitei king. It was located in the upper reaches of the Iril river in the Tangkhul country and used to supply timber for making boat to the king. The control over Chingsong was an important strategy of any powerful Meitei ruler. In the east, he raided and defeated the Tangkhuls of Lontai village.⁹

Battle with the Mayangs (Thongnang)

The chronicles¹⁰ record the invasion for the first time, of Kyamba's kingdom by the Mayang (Thongnangs) in 1504 A.D. The identification of their invaders is still vague. The editor of the Ningthourol Lambuba thinks that the Thongnangs were the Kacharis. R.K. Jhalajit Singh thinks otherwise. He writes, "We do not think, the invaders were Kacharis, for by the time, they had not yet arrived in the plains of Cachar. It is likely that the invaders were the Kochs. Nara Narayan, the famous king of Koch died in 1584 A.D. after a long reign". According to A.C. Banerjee in the reign of Nara Narayan tributes were recieved from some countries including Manipur. But so far we have found no such thing in the records of Manipur. Still it is probable that the fight of 1504 was between the Manipuris and the Koches¹⁰ Regarding Nara Narayan's relation with Manipur, E.A. Gait observes, "Messengers were sent to the Raja of Manipur calling on him to submit and pay tribute, and the Raja, feeling himself too weak to oppose so powerful a prince, at once complied with the requisition. His tribute was fixed at twenty thousand rupees, three hundred gold mohars and ten elephants"¹¹ As Nara Naryan's reign was from 1540, it is not convincing that Nara Narayan must have established his suzerainty over Manipur. Even if Nara Narayan got the tributes from Manipur it was during the weak rule of his successors who reigned before Mung-Yamba. The first reference to Mayang was during the reign of Naothingkhong who married a Mayang princess Chingurembi from the west. According to W.I. Singh who gives a hypothetical interpretation, the Mayangs were among those inhabitants of Basa who were defeated by Samlung the Shan prince; Mayangs and other inhabitants of Basa settled at Lamlangtong in the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D. When the Lamlangtong principality was defeated by the Moirangs (Kege), the Mayangs took shelter over Laimatol peak in the Loiijing hills along with a cognate tribe known as Thongnangs. Some of these Mayangs were dispersed among the Tibeto-Burman tribes of Bodo-Kachari and Tripuri who afterward were called Mayang in Manipur's literary documents. Some Mayangs were left behind in the hills of Manipur and were discovered by a Khuman chief, Nongyai Thingkhonhoiba who raided the village of Pari, which according to W.I. Singh was a corruption from Baasa to Basi, the inhabitants of Basa (Basi). The Mayang revolt was supported by Kongyamba. The second wave of invasion of Mayangs was in 1504.¹² Singh further writes, "The

second wave of invasion of the Mayangs was in the year 1504 A.D. In the first place, the Mayangs killed several Meiteis and they became momentarily victorious. These group of Mayangs were different from the earlier Mayangs. The battle was fought at a place known as Amehi Nongmaiko, Tangkhul Leihoupok lying in the north western part of Manipur close to Imphal valley. The place is believed to be on the north western side of Ngaprum Chingjen (on the New Cachar road). When the news of the defeat had reached, prince Nongthomba, son of Kyamba rushed to the place with the reinforced force. The Mayangs were repulsed. This group of Mayangs are found to be of Bodo group of people like Timafi-cha and Tima-cha who were later known as Kacharis and Tripura.¹³ The Mayangs were among the earliest settlers from Bengal who established a principality at Lammangtong (later on known as Bishnupur).

The invaders came fully equipped and Kyamba deputed the Angom chief Loijangamba to fight against the Mayangs. The Meitei forces were defeated. Then, Kyamba sent his son prince Nongthomba. The prince was accompanied by the army and nobles of the Yaishkul quarter of the capital. He is said to have left for the battle front riding a buffalo from the crowded market of the capital. In the battle front, he rebuked the Angom noble for his failure to check the invaders. However, with renewed vigour, they made a joint counter attack, and the Mayangs were defeated. Several warriors were captured including a Chup-ra-cha of the Mayangs, perhaps Yubaraja of the invaders.¹⁴

Reforms of Kyamba: Reorganisation of the Pana System

Great was he as a conqueror, he was equally efficient in his administration. His activities as ruler and reformer were well projected in the various administrative innovations he introduced. In 1497, he established two revenue or administrative districts or circles known as Ahallup and Naharup panas by appointing two persons as supervisors or lakpas of the panas. It has been recorded in the chronicles that king Loiyamba established six administrative circles in the early part of the twelfth century A.D. Kyamba further modified the pana system to suit the needs of his times. The establishment of Ahallup and Naharup panas by Kyamba clearly contradicts the claim made by several scholars that Nongda Lairen Pakhangba established the four panas. Perhaps the introduction of the word "Pana" in the revenue administration was an influence of the Shans who came into contact with Manipur in the fifteenth century.

Chronicle Keeping: Cheithaba and Cheiraoba

One of the greatest contributions of Kyamba to the cultural heritage of Manipur was the introduction of the keeping of the royal chronicle known as the Cheitharol Kumbaba (counting of years according to Cheithaba) from the year 1485 A.D. He also started the system of Cheithaba which was the foundation of the Meitei calendar. Cheithaba (Chei = Stick, Thaba = Giving up) was done by a man who agreed to be the scapegoat of the king and the country for the particular year. The year was named after the person who was performing the Cheithaba ceremony. In 1485 A.D. the year was named Hiyangloi, the Cheithaba of the year. Thus from 1485 onward, every year was named after the Cheithaba. Cheithaba was developed into Cheitharol Kumbaba. In the reformation of the calendar and the chronicle of the state, Kyamba, according to tradition, took the advice of seven scholars in preparing two books. The chronicle, called Kumbaba and Laithak Leikharol, a compendium of myths, tradition and geneologies of the Meiteis.¹⁵

Cheiraoba was the festival marking the end of the year which was announced by shouting to the people that the year had ended. Cheiraoba became a very important festival of the Meiteis.

Absorption of Foreigners in Meitei Society:**Beginning of A Plural Society?**

Manipur had always attracted immigrants throughout her long history. Kyamba's stable and powerful kingdom which could provide shelter to the Indian immigrants, specially the Brahmins during the period of great Muslim expansion in India attracted the people of the neighbouring countries, the Hindu kingdoms in India, and Shan states in upper Burma. The Brahmins had migrated to Manipur in the past. But during the reign of Kyamba, the Bamon Khunthok, (the migration of the Brahmin) a text in Manipuri, records the migration of Brahmins to Manipur. During his reign the Brahmins were employed to look after the Hindu temples and to act as astrologers. The other non Brahmin Hindu migrants were the Lairikyengbams who were employed as royal scribes. The Brahmins and Lairikyengbams married Manipuri women. However, the Brahmins formed a separate social group (later on caste) outside the Meitei society. They accepted Manipuri (Meitei) as their mother tongue but they became the religious and scholarly leaders who also acted as missionaries of Hinduism. The

Lairikyengbams entered other branch of the state services. Their knowledge of the language of other parts of India put them in good stead while dealing with the foreigners. Other Indians, however, were absorbed into the clan system of the Meiteis. The Brahmin families who were the ancestors of the later Manipuri Brahmins came to Manipur during Kyamba's reign. Bamon Khunthok records that the Brahmins of the family names like Adhikarimayum, Sija Guru Mayum, Leihaothaobam, Takhurchangbam, Phurailakpam came during this reign. They came from Gujarat, Kanpur, Assam, Sylhet, Nandagram and Kharadah. The Brahmins participated in religious and scholarly activities of the court but were less involved in the administration of the country. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, observes, "The arrival of Brahmins enriched the cultural life of the kingdom. The Brahmins brought with them knowledge of Sanskrit and some scriptures and astrology. Their arrival and permanent settlement continued upto the close of the nineteenth century. The Brahmins began to speak Manipuri and became good Manipuris. The influence of Sanskrit on the literature of Manipur can be increasingly felt from the time of Kyamba".¹⁶

The Shan or Pongs or Kabaws came to Manipur and became the subjects of the rulers of Manipur in Kabaw valley. Kiyamba's liberal social policy of absorption of foreign elements in the Meitei society was responsible for the intgreation of Shans to Meitei society.

Coming of Hinduism: Beginning of Vishnu Worship

Kyamba's reign was a very important landmark in the history of Hinduism in Manipur. It has been recorded that one of the presents given by king Khekhomba of Pong to Kyamba was a stone image of a God (Pha) which turned out to be a statue of Lord Vishnu riding over the Garuda. The Pong king according to tradition ¹⁷ did not know the identity of the statue. In his dream, it was revealed that the statue was of a God and the king was enjoined upon to hand over the statue to the king of Manipur. Accordingly, the Pong king gave it to Kyamba in a silver casket. Kyamba directed his officials to find the Brahmins who would be able to worship the statue. Some Brahmins were found taking bath at the Paonam Hiden on the Imphal river and were brought to the king. The Brahmins identified the statue as Lord Vishnu, the Supreme God of the Hindus. The Brahmins were entrusted by the king to worship Lord Vishnu. The worship of Vishnu was started in an innocuous way and later on when Manipur was converted into

Hinduism, the statue was kept in the temple of Govindaji.¹⁸ Kyamba is reported to have constructed a Vishnu temple of brick at Bishenpur which was for some time the capital of the kingdom.¹⁹ It was a Bengali hut type of brick structure suggesting clearly that the Vishnu temple was constructed by the artisans who migrated from Bengal and settled at Lammangdong, a former name of Bishnupur. R.K. Sanahal points out that according to a chronicle, Ngangom Phura, the temple was constructed by Ngangom Chingsomba and dedicated to God in the reign of Kyamba.²⁰ He quotes from Ningthourol Lambuba that Vishnu was installed in the temple of Ngangom. And the lineage of the Brahmins who looked after the temple came to be known as "Phuralailatpam," worshipper of the God of the temple.²¹ P. Gunindro also agrees with the views of R.K. Sanahal. But in the items of presents given by Pong king Khekhomba to Kyamba as mentioned by B.C. Allen are included, a golden Pandhan, a silver mounted dao, and a litter with a sacred spear. There was no mention of the statue of Vishnu.²² However, we cannot rule out the possibility of the coming of Vishnu image from upper Burma but the construction of the temple by Kyamba was not collaborated by chronicles. Existing evidences point to the patronage given by Kyamba to the Hindu god which was installed in the temple of the Ngangom family. But the architecture of the temple clearly shows that it was constructed by the artisans conversant with the Pagoda architecture of Burma. One cannot but reproduce the following paragraph on the style of the temple.

"In the present state of our knowledge it is very difficult to ascertain the exact style of the temple in the context of Indian Silpa text which recognises three styles only, Nagara style, the Vabera style and the Dravida style. The present temple of Bishnupur can not be put in any of the categories of the above mentioned styles. However, the corbelled arch employed in this temple gives us little information about the builders. According to Percy Brown, this type of corbelled arch can be attributed to Burmese masonry. The corbelled arch employed here in the temple of Vishnu, seems to be the same technique and style (the method of placing brick unit into juxtaposition in the premajite of true arch). The same arch can be seen in many buildings of Burma of the medieval period. Similar archs also can be seen in the Puttak pagoda of Pagan (Burma) of the 11th century A.D. From the above similarity in brick works, the builders of the Vishnu temple might be attributed to the Burmese masonary. Moreover, King Kyamba had a good relation with Mao Shans (now in Burma); cultural exchanges were made

between king Kyamba and Chaofa Khekhomba (the Mao Shan King)".²³ M.S. Vat, also thought as early as 1954 that the architecture of the temple was a link between the Indian and Further India type of temples (South East Asia) and in particular the temples of Java called Chandis. He pointed out the feature of Bishnupur temple that could be compared with the Chandis of Java namely, (a) Two stronger brick structure with a narrow porch as in the Chandi Punta Deva of the 7th century A.D. (b) Narrow porch with corbelled arch in Barobudar of the 8th century A.D. and (c) Ventillation holes in Chandi Pawon of the 9th century A.D.²⁴

Despite the beginning of Vishnu worship by Brahmins, perhaps patronised by the king himself, there is no evidence to show that the king was converted into Hinduism. He was the follower of the traditional Meitei religion. Kyamba was one of the greatest kings of Manipur. The extent of his kingdom from the Kabui (Rongmei) country in the west to the west to the Chindwin river in the east, covering the whole Manipur valley except the autonomous Moirang principality had made Manipur a power to be reckoned with by the Shan states in upper Burma. After a reign of forty years he died in 1508 A.D. at the age of sixtyfour. He was a great conqueror, a wise statesman and administrator whose contribution to the civilisation of Manipur was fully acknowledged by posterity.

SUCCESSORS OF KYAMBA : A PERIOD OF STAGNANCY 1508-62

The half a century after Kyamba's death was a period of internal instability and stagnancy. It was due to the weak rulers who succeeded Kyamba in the first half of the sixteenth century before another brilliant period to be inaugurated by Mungyamba and his great son Khagemba which spanned over a century. There were six rulers during fifty four years between 1508-62 A.D., ranging from the reign of one year to eighteen years. The rulers were Koiremba (1508-12), the second son of Kyamba followed by Lam Kyamba (1512-42), who was succeeded by Kabomba (1524-42) whose reign of eighteen years was the only commendable period in half a century of dull history. Kabomba was succeeded by Tangjanba who ruled between 1542-45. He was succeeded by Chalaamba (1545-62) who was the son of Kyamba's younger brother Sanongba. Chalaamba started a new line of rulers, which was, of course, a colateral line from Kyamba.

Koiremba ascended the throne in 1508 A.D. at the age of twenty. His short reign of four years was marked by his conflict with the Angom chief Loijangamba who was a noble in his court. The daughter of Angom chief was married to Koiremba. During a royal boat race, Koiremba insulted his young queen. The Angom chief was offended but kept quite. He organised a feast for his clansmen at Langrei-pung.²⁵ King Koiremba did not allow Loijangamba to attend the royal court. The chronicle says that the Angos were assassinated and Angom chief Loijangamba was killed.²⁶ It is further recorded that the king's maternal uncle's family of Leishangthem was killed to the last man. W. Yumjao Singh observes, "Here, the chronicle is silent as to whether he was killed by the Angom King with members of his maternal uncle's family who supported him."²⁷

Lamkyamba succeeded his brother Koiremba in 1512 A.D. at the age of twenty seven. He had a reign of eleven years. He once again tried to reassert the Ningthouja hegemony over the rural areas. Loitang village was defeated in 1514; Araichampra was defeated in 1518, Sinkhong was conquered in 1520 A.D. and Sairem in 1522 A.D. He constructed a royal palatial building at the Kangla. The chronicle records that there was a big famine in 1515 A.D. and a smallpox epidemic occurred in 1520 A.D.

After the death of Lamkyamba, his minor son, Nong-in-phaba ascended the throne at the age of ten in 1553. His mother, queen dowager Changning-Phabi was married to Angom chief Kyamba, a successor of Loijangamba who was killed by Koiremba.

Now the Angom chief who was the paramour of the queen dowager was the ruler. Nong-in-phaba and his mother were in his hands. Angom chief Kyamba became very arrogant and started wearing "egret feathers dyed red with lac." Queen Changning Phabi reminded him that it was not the custom of the Angom to put on the egret feathers which was exclusively reserved for the Ningthoujas alone. The Angom chief felt insulted and was furious and killed both the mother and the son in the same year of succession to the throne. Nong-in-phaba did not perform the coronation ceremony.

Kabomba, another son of Lam Kyamba ascended the throne in 1523 A.D. at the age of 6. He had a reign of 18 years and died in 1542 at the young age of 24. His reign saw some vigour again. Lampum was conquered in 1525, Chakpas were defeated in 1527, Lamkai in 1529, Tusem in 1532 A.D. The Tripuris in 1533, Kamu in 1542, Kabaw Shans in the same year. The chronicle records the digging of the

Takhen Khong (Tripura canal) in 1533 A.D. to mark the victory over the Tripuris. The smallpox, and cattle epidemic occurred during his reign.

Contact with Ahoms

His reign saw for the first time a contact between Manipur and Ahom kingdom of Assam, known to the Meitei as Tekhao (derived from Dikhu river). A trade route to upper Assam was opened in 1536. The Ahom chronicle records that "envoys were exchanged with the Raja of Manipur and presents were exchanged."²⁸ It was a period of great military expedition of the Ahoms under king Suhungmung who defeated the Kacharis and sacked the capital of Dimapur in 1536 A.D. Cheitharol Kumbaba records that a Manipuri girl named Khongnanbi (who was Tekhao queen) was given to marriage to the Ahom king. She went to upper Assam by the newly opened route in 1536-37. An elephant named Tekhao Ngamba, a Ahom fishing trap known as Tekhao roo and aniseed were the presents from the Ahom king.

Tangjamba succeeded his father Kabomba in 1542 with whose death in 1545 at the age of 21, the direct line of Kyamba became extinct and a new line with Chalaamba who was son of Sanongba, the younger brother of Kyamba came to the throne in 1545 at the age of 32. There was rumour of an impending invasion of the Tripuris across the Kharam hills. This might have been the projected invasion of Manipur by the Koch king Nara-Narayan who was promised a large quantity of tribute in terms of money, treasure and elephants.²⁹ Iru was conquered in 1554 A.D. He raided Samaphel in 1556, Lelhang in 1558 A.D. and Anal chief Nongningkhai was made a prisoner. He conquered Thingonong in 1560 A.D., raided Meinung, Narum, Thingnang and Ithing. He died in 1562 at the age of forty eight.

Among his peace time activities, mention may be made of the excavation of a canal at Leishangkhang in 1555 A.D., and the raising of stone megaliths at the market place. One stone was raised by the villagers. During his reign, immigrants from the west, the Brahmins and Khetrimayum. One Brahmin named Govindajee came from Gaur and was allotted the family title of Chandrashyam Mayum; Krishna Charan Tiwari came from Kanpur and was allotted the family title of Khurai Taba Kanauji Mayum (A Kanauji Brahmin who settled at Khurai). One Kailam came from Gaur. His wife gave birth to two sons one of who was Raghunath. He and Konok Thengra, a great scholar-

astrologer were good friends. After the death of Ragunath, Thengra married the younger wife of Ragunath who gave birth to two sons who were allotted the family title of Gurumayum.

MUNGYAMBA (1562 - 1597)

With the accession of Mungyamba, the stagnancy of half a century was over, and Manipur once again embarked on a career of vigour and expansion. Mungyamba was a great conqueror and his reign was marked by a large number of military expeditions.

Military Conquest; Consolidation of Kabaw Valley; Invasion of Mungkhong Mungyang (1565)

The long period of weak rule of the first half of the century had loosened the hold of the Meitei State over the Shan principalities. It was left to Mungyamba to reassert the Meitei suzerainty over the Kabaw valley. The chronicle refers to the repeated military expeditions of Mungyamba into Kabaw valley during his long reign. In 1565, Mungyamba whose earlier name was Thangwai Ningthem Kyamba invaded Mungkhong Mungyang in the eastern fringe of the Kabaw valley. He defeated the Shan ruler of Mungyang. He captured several guns, a golden statue of a cock and five chiefs including two with the title of Chaopha (Sawbwa of Shan) like Chaopha Mangtra and Chaopha Womsing. Ningthourol Lambuba makes an exaggerated record that he captured one hundred chiefs including the chief of Akla. Horses were brought as war booties. Mangsha was defeated. Its chief Khangcheng was taken prisoner. In 1578, the Khamran was fixed as the boundary between Manipur and Shan states. In 1571, Samsok was conquered. In 1572, the Kabaw Shans were defeated. Again in 1582, Mungyamba raided Samsok. In 1597, he conquered Kyang and Shan Yathek in Kabaw valley.

Consolidation of Western Hills

Mungyamba sent out several military expeditions towards the various tribal villages in the Koubru hills in the west. He raided Lamhang village in Koubru. The village was defeated and their houses were burnt. Mungyamba captured several cultivators and fisher folks who were settled in the village. He captured Maram chief (Khullakpa) Tamnarong, Thangal chief Sarangpung and Lamhang chief Korilong.

Ningthourol Lambuba records that he also attacked Koireng village of Samakhun. Many warriors were killed and many houses were burnt. The Koireng chief Thangsha Utong was taken prisoner. Cheitharol Kumbaba gives the date of the conquest of Samakhun in 1572 A.D. According to this chronicle, it was a Kabui village. The Liangmei village of Makhan was also conquered and chief Meicham Chamangmei was captured. He also paid a visit to Kabui hills in 1577 A.D.

Subjugation of South Eastern Hills

Mungyamba defeated Tosen village of one hundred houses and captured its chief Nashilo. He also defeated the Moyon tribes men, Gayals (Mithun) were taken as booties. He also raided the Chakpa village of Chirong Kharopi and captured its chief, Marong. He raided Ningen and Anal in 1592 A.D. He conquered Anal Khullen in 1595 with heavy losses. According to an Anal tradition, he was defeated by Anal Khullen village.

Mungyamba brought his son, the crown prince, the future Khagemba during the expedition to give a field training in warfare. During the first invasion, the Anals defeated them and they made a retreat by boat; on the hasty return, they lost their swords, shields and copper vessels; Lamkang was also conquered.

Consolidation of the Southern Hills

In the southern hills, Mungyamba sent an expedition to a village named Changbi Lakonphai. He raided the villages on the Tuiyai (Tuivai) river now in the southern hills of Manipur bordering Chin Hills and Mizoram. There is a stray reference made in the Ningthourol Lambuba about a group of invaders known as the Thongnang who came from the south western side led by one Hasom and Naran. They were Bodo-Kacharis from Tripura or Kachari kingdom who invaded south west Manipur. Hasom might have been a corruption of Hasan, a Muslim adventurer. Naran or Narain was a Hindu. Sakang was also conquered. Ningthourol Lambuba further records that Mungyamba's wife Kainou Changpombi participated in the military expeditions in the eastern hills and Kabaw valley, against the Monshangs and Shans respectively. Her exploits remind us of the similar adventures of warrior queen Linthoingambi.

The Meitei kingdom had fully established suzerainty over Manipur valley and the surrounding hill region, the Tangkhul hills and Kabaw valley.

Social and Cultural Life

The Cheitharol Kumbaba gives a picture of a traditional Meitei society in the second half of the sixteenth century. The custom of Utrong Hongba, the celebration of the death anniversary was in practice. Utrong Hongba was the forerunner of the Phiroi of the later period. Mungyamba celebrated this ceremony in honour of his father Chalaamba. Uhongba, tree ceremony or raising of wooden megaliths was also performed. The queen of Mungyamba died of an injury she suffered due to a fall from a wooden bridge at Mongsangei. As it was an unnatural death, the king performed Shangkhru ceremony which was later on known as the Chup Shaba (oath taking between the dead and the living).

The community feasting and drinking were popular social occasions for different social groups, clans and priests. Even the king participated in such community feasts. On such occasions, commodities and animals were distributed among the participants. Goyals (mithuns) were distributed among the priests participating in a drinking feast.

Boat Race

Boat race became an annual festive occasion as the king and his nobles participated in such competitions. There were tragedies in which people got drowned in the rivers.

Wax Coated Shirts and Silver Crown

The chronicle records the introduction of wax coated shirts to avoid rain. Silver crowns were also adopted during his reign.

Bride Price

A Manipuri princess was given in marriage to a Shan ruler of Kabaw valley. She was described as Kabaw Leima (Queen of Kabaw) Sana Hekpi. The bride price of this princess was seven elephants.

Natural Calamities

The chronicle records several natural calamities like epidemics of livestock like, cattle, pig, dog and fowl. The failure of harvest due to invasion of pests on standing crops was also recorded. Even earthquake was recorded.

Administrative Reforms

The king established Ametpa Loishang, the department of medicine men - it was a sort of medical department. The queen was the head of the department. The chronicle records the malarial fever which was known as Arum, or Kabaw Rai (fever of Kabaw). Mungyamba himself suffered from malaria and once he failed to participate in the annual boat race.

Establishment of Granaries

Mungyamba established several granaries or state godowns to store food grains. These granaries were known as Kei, Such Keis were established at several places including Mongsangkei and Chajing. The state would distribute the food grains to the needy people during famine or lean seasons. In one instance, a Shan who was employed at Mongsangkei escaped and he was killed.

Construction of Road

The roads were constructed by the people of different administrative circles, most probably the Panas under the Lallup system.

Food and Drinks

The food and drinks of the people are recorded in the chronicle. During the construction of royal granary at Mongsangkei a test was made whether the goyal (mithun) or buffalo produced more meat. It was found that the goyal produced more meat than the buffalo.

Chinese "Cannibal"

Cheitharol Kumbaba refers to the visit of a Chinese "Cannibal" in 1588 A.D. Ningthourol Lambuba further elaborates that they were called

“Cannibals” as they indulged in human sacrifice. Perhaps they were some barbarian tribes of Yunan province of China. The leader of the Chinese marauders, Maidana was killed by Mungyamba in a sword duel.

Use of Guns

The chronicle records that during the invasion of Mungkhong Mungyang by Mungyamba, guns were recovered from the Shans as booties. These guns must have been imported by the Shans or the Burmese rulers from the European traders, the Portuguese. The Burmese king during the period was Bayinnaung. He is said to have conquered Shan states in upper Burma including Manipur according to G.E. Harvey and W.S. Desai. This is evidently not correct. It is possible that during his early rule, Bayinnaung defeated some Shan states. But in 1565, Mungyamba invaded Kabaw valley and defeated the rulers of these principalities in Kabaw valley: thus indicating Manipur's suzerainty over them. Therefore, there is no question of mainland Manipur to be conquered by a Burmese king. Manipur remained an independent and powerful kingdom during the second half of the sixteenth century till the death of Mungyamba in 1597 after a successful reign of thirty five years.³⁰

KHAGEMBA (1597-1652)

Khagemba (1597-1652) was the most illustrious ruler of mediaval Manipur whose long reign was a remarakable epoch in the history of the kingdom. The authentic royal chronicle, coupled with the contemprrorary literary works both historical and religious, supplemented by archaeological evidences specially coins have given a comprehensive history of Manipur under the great king. His great father Mungyamba had bequeathed to him a stable and powerful state which was further expanded by him, greater both in size and strength. His father took great care in giving proper training to his son in military warfare, statecraft, religious and literary attainments and diplomacy. When he ascended the throne in 1597 at the age of twentyfour, Khagemba was already fully matured and well equipped to preside over the affairs of the state and guide the duties of his people and the empire. He was earlier known as Sana Hihouhan Poirei Ningthouhanba. He had two brothers Chingsomba and Sanongba who aspired to capture the

throne at an opportune time. The chronicle gives interesting account of the military training given to him by his father which may be taken as the standard training which was undergone by a Meitei crown prince. Moirangthem Chandrasing observes, "Relating the extraordinary qualities and ideas of prince Ningthouhanba, his father Mungyamba imparted proper training and instruction to his young son about administration, statecraft, military affairs, justice and diplomacy. He was trained in those subjects which ought to be mastered by a crown prince of Manipur, namely, horse riding, hiking, archery, sword and open fighting and use of Arambai, a weapon of the cavalry. He got instructions in the art of negotiations with foreign power and related diplomatic etiquette and behaviour."³¹ Cheitharol Kumbaba records that in 1594 A.D. Mungyamba during his expedition to Anal tribe, taught Khagemba, the art of warfare. On return they anchored at Makhao village on the Imphal river and the tribal warriors of Makhao attacked the royal forces on boat. Mungyamba lost swords, shields and copper vessels.³² It is said, in this battle the chief of makhaorok was killed and his head was brought by the king and the skull was fixed at the royal boat during the annual boat race.³³

Military Conquest

The vigorous policy of territorial aggrandisement of king Mungyamba was continued by Khagemba. During fifty years of reign, Khagemba tried to consolidate his rule in Kabaw valley, check the Muslim invasion from the west and establish his hold over the whole hill area. This necessitated vigorous military campaigns throughout his reign. Rather, war had become a life style for the people. Khagemba was a really a great conqueror who consolidated his father's kingdom and expanded the kingdom of Manipur and defended her successfully from the several foreign invaders like, the Muslim, Kachari and the Shans of Kabaw valley. He also strengthened the internal political control over the hill tribes by frequent military expeditions and raids over the refractory tribes and villages in the hill areas of the kingdom.

Military Campaign in Kabaw Valley

Kabaw valley and its several Shan principalities, Samjok (Samsok), Tammu, Kyang, Khambat were also conquered by Kyamba and annexed into the territory of Manipur. His successors in the first half of

the sixteenth century could not continue to maintain strong political grip over them. But in the second half of the sixteenth century, Mungyamba reestablished his control over them. But these tributary principalities, due to the physical distance from the capital of the kingdom and the absence of direct administration over them tried to be free from the political control of Manipur. These assertions of these principalities were also encouraged by the bigger states in upper Burma and the central political power of Ava. In order to integrate Kabaw valley with Manipur, officials from Manipur were to be constantly posted in strategic positions in Kabaw valley like Tammu and Ango ching Hills on the west bank of Chindwin river. There were migration of Shans from Kabaw valley into Manipur valley and they were absorbed into the social fold of the Meiteis; they were employed in the services of the state either in the army or civil administration. Meitei villages were established in strategic points in Kabaw valley and the routes connecting the valleys, the first important village being Kwatha, a betel nut planting village of the Meiteis established by Kyamba. Since the political relation between Manipur and the Shan principalities in Kabaw valley was important the vassal states were to be clearly watched and controlled. Moreover Manipur's administration on the conquered Shans or tribes was always severe and harsh and thus the people could not be totally won over. At the same time, the Shan connection with other bigger Shan states with whom they had socio-economic and cultural contacts was very strong. Therefore, a very strict and ruthless political control was established by the kings of Manipur. It is in the light of this not so congenial situation that Kabaw valley was controlled for the access to and control of the natural resources therein. And its control of the valley in the eastern frontier of Manipur provided a safety to the kingdom of Manipur from the invasion of the powerful Burmese Kingdom.

Khagemba, The Conqueror of the Chinese

In 1602, five years after his coronation king Ningthouhanba (Khagemba) made the major military campaign in the trans Chindwin basin³⁴ Ningthourol Lambuba, while not giving dates refers to the invasion of the country of the Chinese (Khagi in Manipuri) barbarians (cannibals) in the land of the rising sun which was beyond the Chindwin river.³⁵ This chronicle further explains that the Shan (Kabaw) and Chinese (Khagi) whom the king conquered were

eaters of meat and sometimes they indulged in cannibalism.³⁶ Though it is not possible to accept the chronicle's description of Chinese cannibals, it is likely that the people whom the king came into military conflict must be the tribes living in the border of China or Yunan province. According to chronicles, the Meitei king attacked the principal Chinese village (or town) along with many brave Meitei warriors and defeated their chief Choupha Hongdei.³⁷ Regarding the year of the conflict with the Chinese, there have been various speculations. No particular date has been mentioned in the royal chronicle. Cheitharol Kumbaba does not record the incident of invasion or conflict with the Chinese. The chronicle refers to Laiyinthou "Khagi Ngamba" = (Godly king, Khagi Ngamba, conqueror of Chinese) being entered in 1631 A.D. The same year, king's brother Khwairakpa visited the land of Chinese.³⁸ T.C. Hodson suggests that the invasion of the Chinese or the victory over the Chinese occurred in 1630 A.D.³⁹ The sequence of events in Ningthourol Lambuba suggests that the victory was in the early part of his reign during his campaign in Kabaw valley which was 1602 according to Cheitharol Kumbaba. Jhalajit Singh thinks that the event occurred in 1631 A.D.⁴⁰ As to the places of conflict it was definitely in the eastern boundary of the Kabaw valley. Perhaps it was a marauding horde of Chinese who strayed into the trans Chindwin basin and Khagemba who was campaigning in Kabaw valley came to know of this encroachment and defeated them. Again this reference to Choupha Hongdei, as the chief of the Chinese who was captured by the Meitei king raises a question of the identity of the chief of the Chinese. The title Choupha is the Shan title of chief: Tsawbwa (Sawbwa = corrupted by the Meitei as Chaupha). It is possible that the Chinese marauders were employed by a local Shan chief (Sawbwa = Chaupha) Chaupha Hongdei to invade Manipur and they were defeated. The visit of prince Khwairakpa to Khagi country (Chinese) in 1631 is still very vague. But long distance trade between Manipur with the Yunan Province via upper Burma was already in existence for many centuries. Therefore, the visit might be a historical event. However, Ningthou Hanba came to be known as Khagemba throughout his reign, since this battle against the Chinese.

His campaigns in Kabaw valley were directed against tributary states. The state of Kyang, a major principality was invaded by Khagemba in 1602 and 177 prisoners were captured.⁴¹ Ningthourol Lambuba records that a daughter of Thangwai Ningthou Kyamba (Mungyamba) named Ayangpha was married to the chief of Kyang.

Perhaps, the Kyang chief illtreated the sister of Khagemba who destroyed Kyang and captured its chief Chou Seng and his wife Chou Soi along with stone masons who were builders of temples.⁴² He also invaded Kyang subsequently in 1624 A.D. and in 1647 A.D.⁴³

In 1607, he invaded Samsok (Thangdut) and captured sixty prisoners. After another raid on Kyang in 1614, in which Khagemba captured a white horse called Maramba invaded Samjok again. In 1628, he raided the Shan principality and took a booty of cattle and buffalo. In 1632, many Shans from Samsok came to settle in Manipur valley. His last raid to Samsok was in 1649 A.D.⁴⁴

Ningthourol Lambuba records the raid of Khagemba on a Chakpa village on the Ango Ching Hills on the bank of Chindwin river.

Burmese invasion

The repeated military campaigns had quelled the Shan principalities. But in the last year of his reign, Khagemba came into conflict with the Burmese who under the Toongoo dynasty were trying to establish their hold over the Shan states in upper Burma. Cheitharol Kumbaba records two invasions by Ava (Burmese) in 1648 and 1651 A.D. The invasion was in the eastern frontier in the Kabaw valley. The Avas were repulsed. In the first invasion, prince Mungyamba defeated Burmese invasion.⁴⁵ Two prisoners were captured by him. Thus, years later in 1651, the Avas invaded again but were defeated but some nobles were killed.⁴⁶

Kachari-Muslim Invasion, 1606

The royal chronicle and a text known as Nongshamei Puya refer to the invasion of Manipur by a combined force of the Kachari and Muslim mercenaries. The invasion was an outcome of an unhappy trifle incident at the royal palace of Manipur. Khagemba had two brothers, Chingsomba and Sanongba. There was a boat race in which his brother Chingsomba borrowed the boat of Sanongba which was broken due to collision during the boat race. Sanongba wanted the original boat which was not possible. Khagemba intervened in favour of Khwairakpa Chingsomba. Sanongba took exception to it and fled to Cachar along with his mother queen dowager Luwang Changbambi and other nobles. He approached the Kachari king to invade Manipur and restore him to the throne of Manipur. The Kachari king (named as

Sapradas Narayan) sent his general Takharek and Bhimbal who was his brother with a Kachari force in 1604 A.D. The Kachari king who was ruling between 1603 and 1610 A.D. was Satradaman alias Pratap Narayan.⁴⁷ Sapra Das Narayan might be a corruption. The Kachari forces crossed the western hills and were encamped at Lamsang at the west Imphal. The Meitei forces were encamped at Luwangli river. In the battle, the Meitei forces were defeated and they retreated towards the capital. The Kachari forces proceeded to Khurai, the northern division of the capital city. Khagemba summoned all the nobles at the palace and appealed them to repulse the Kachari forces. According to the Puya, some brave Meitei nobles made a surprise counter attack and the leaders of the invaders were taken prisoners. Yakharek surrendered to Khagemba and promised not to invade Manipur again. He returned to Kachari kingdom with Sanongba. However, the retreating Kachari soldiers informed their king that Yakharek, Bhimbal and Sanongba betrayed them and became allies of the king of Manipur.

The Kachari king now engaged one Praseng, a leader of the Muslim mercenaries of a locality known as Taraf somewhere near Habigunj in eastern Bengal.⁴⁸ The king deputed another invading forces under the command of Yakharek, Bhimbal and Prasena. This was a joint Kachari and Muslim invasion of Manipur in 1606 A.D. They appeared at Lammangdong, (Bishnupur) in the south western fringe of valley of Manipur. The royal chronicle records the invasion by the Mayangs (Kachari) and Sanongba. Some betel nut traders of Lammangdong reported to the king of the invasion of the Kachari and Muslim forces. Khagemba immediately proceeded to the spot and encamped at Toubun and Khoijuman near the Yangoi river. Khagemba attacked the Kachari forces. He was assisted by his younger brother Chingsomba and general Nongshamei of the Lairikyengbam. The invading forces were defeated. Sanongba was captured and a large number of invading forces including their leaders were taken prisoners. They were Takka Raja, Mayang Tao and his son Phanmei Tao, Mai KaTao. A general of the Kachari king was killed in the battle. One Bhavaraja and one wearing a head dress of eleven feathers of hornbill were killed. Khaga raja of Moirang Oknarel (Ningthoukhong) was taken prisoner. Other prisoners included drummer, weavers, potters, washermen, blacksmiths, musketeers, brassmakers, horses and elephant keepers; stone artisans named Taophing and Sarik Tao the goldsmith. The leader of invaders, Yukhrek was also captured. Other guides and scouts were also captured. The prisoners included fifteen palanquin

riders, fifteen cavalry soldiers, three elephants.⁴⁹ Cheitharol Kumbaba gives an exaggerated account of the capture of the prisoners that "thirty elephants, one thousand guns, one thousand Muslims (Pangans), blacksmiths artisans, musicians, groom, washermen, horse and elephant keepers, - one thousand real Muslims were also captured."⁵⁰ This is a hyperbolic account. The Kachari-Muslim invasion failed and most of the soldiers were not professional soldiers but common peasants who were promised rich rewards for an adventure in an unknown land. Their leaders were captured. Prince Sanongba who was the root cause of the whole misfired military adventure was taken prisoner but was pardoned by his brother, the king. He died as a dejected man in 1619 A.D. But the impact of the invasion on Manipur was quite profound. The influence of the Muslim civilisation under the imperial Mughals was felt in Manipur. The Muslim prisoners were settled and they constituted a useful community in the kingdom. Cheitharol Kumbaba makes a short reference to a fight against the Mughals on the Gwai (Barak) river in 1615 A.D.

The Tripuris whose territory was spread over Cachar and northern Mizoram used to have contact with Manipur both military and commercial. The Tripuris invaded in the south several times in 1603 and 1634. But they were always defeated. In the invasion of 1634 the Tripuris were defeated with two hundred prisoners captured by Manipur.

Extension and Consolidation over Hill Tribes

Khagemba made intensive military campaigns against the tribes in all directions of the hill region in order to consolidate his authority among the hill people. The Cheitharol Kumbaba and Ningthourol Lambuba refer to a large number of military expeditions towards hill tribes starting from 1598 A.D. when he invaded the Koirang-Kabui country to the defeat of the Marams in 1644 A.D. and Monthei in 1646 A.D.

In the eastern hills, he invaded the Maring village of Meiyengching which was completely destroyed in 1605. A dozen villages which came to the help of the Maring village were defeated. Maring chief Loktomba Amo, Shangleimacha Moithing, Maring Amo, Karonglong Sasung Narong were taken prisoners. The Tangkhul Itok, Itek and Machi were also conquered by the king.

In 1608, the Purums were defeated; so also Mayang Khang and Tarang were conquered. In 1609, Thangal was conquered. Another

expedition was sent against the Purum in 1626, Maring Khudei Kangoi in 1624, Maring Yaoton, Machi in 1625. The same year, the five villages of Monting, Lamnem, Laipan, Tonpung and Kharam were raided.

Tompi was conquered in 1636, so also Nongphou. In 1640, king invaded the Kabui village of Nungtek. In the battle, they used guns and one Shan gunner was killed. In 1640, again the Moyons were defeated. In 1644, the Marams were defeated; their chief Charoi Kapeng was taken prisoner. In 1646, Monthei was conquered.

The villages in the foothills in the north, like Mapau, Purum Likli, Ikou, Ithailok, Ihangla were also conquered. No other ruler of Manipur had made such an extensive military campaign as done by Khagemba. The hill tribes were brought under his political control. But such a control was always short lived and had to be constantly asserted by frequent military expeditions. The political boundary of Manipur had extended from the Gwai (Barak) to the Chindwin, from Maram hills to the Tuivai. Even Moirang had ceased to be an autonomous principality in the valley of Manipur.

Khagemba as a Nation Builder

Great as a conquerer and a war hero, Khagemba was equally gifted as an administrator and a nation builder. He was the spirit behind all social and cultural innovations, economic and technological changes, political, administrative reforms and religious and literary development in the kingdom. There was no part of the Meitei life and society which was not touched by the great king. The Meitei political and administrative system was fully developed, the social and economic system was further developed; even the religious system was fully systematized. He patronised literature, religion, sports and games. He was really a great nation builder to whom the Meitei nation owed a lot.

Liberal Social Policy

The pluralistic foundation of Manipur's society was further strengthened when large scale immigration was permitted by Khagemba when he settled the Muslims and Kacharis war captives in Manipur after the Kachari-Muslim invasion of 1606 A.D. The Muslims were given several economic occupations. They married local women but the liberal social policy of Manipur allowed the Muslims to follow

their religion and particular way of life. A department was created under a Kazi who would administer Muslim personal law for the immigrants. These Muslims in turn contributed to the enrichment of the economy and cultural life of Manipur. The chronicle also refers to the immigration of the Shans of Kabaw valley to Manipur valley and their ultimate absorption into the Meitei social system.

The Brahmins continued to migrate into Manipur. Bamon Khunthok refers to the arrival of eight Brahmin families from different parts of eastern India. They were Aribam Vishnu Latpam, Aribam Sagol Lai Latpam, Aribam Tampak Lai Latpam, Samurai Latpam, Sanglakpam, Hidang Mayum, Kongbrai Latpam, Thongakebam. They were given surnames according to the gods or deities they worshipped or maintained.

Polity

Khagemba was an administrative innovator. During his reign in 1608 A.D. the title of the king was changed to Lainigthou, the Godly king, thus according a divine status to the monarch. Prostration was also introduced as a court etiquette.⁵¹ The feudal state system was perfected during his reign. He introduced very elaborate social etiquettes and rules for performance of duties by different officials at the court. The nobility who formed the backbone of the state system was further strengthened. He always thought that unity and harmony among his nobles would strengthen the kingdom and enhance the prestige and power of the king. He also gave encouragement and respect to the chiefs of the hill tribes. During the time of the king, the hill tribes and the nobles stood by the king as demonstrated during the Kachari-Muslim invasions of 1604 and 1606.

The Cheitharol Kumbaba records the introduction of palanquin (Dolai) in 1605 A.D.⁵² Dolais were widely used in Assam and Bengal. A rough form of dolai was already in existence in Manipur. It was modified into palanquin.⁵³ Khagemba introduced the practice of going out with nobles and high officials on the palanquin in procession on state occasions or social and cultural events. It was recognised as the status and dignity of the officials and nobles. The planquins were carried by common people under the Lallup system. Khagemba perhaps thought that such display of feudal grandeur would encourage the nobility to be efficient and loyal to him. Thus he appointed the officers connected with palanquin riding, palanquin riders, and supervisors of palanquin (Dolai Paba) who acted as civil police.

Lallup system continued to be the steel frame of the state system throughout his reign. But he introduced modifications in the land tenural and land revenue system within the Lallup. The land owners were to pay paddy as tax of rent to the state. Practice of payment in little cash (sel) was introduced during his reign. The administration of revenue circles known as Panas, being four in number had been further strengthened. Pana system was introduced not only in administration, but also in military, sports and games even.

For the administration of the capital city, it was divided into four quarters: the Yaiskul (under Yaiskullakpa), Khwai, under one Khwairakpa) Khurai (under Khurailakpa) and Wangkhei (under Wangkheilakpa). The princes were usually appointed to be the lakpas (Head of administration) of these four quarters. His brother who revolted against him, Sanongba was Khurai lakpa. Another brother Chingsomba was Khwairakpa.

Departments: (Loisangs)

Departments or Loisangs were reorganised by him. Mention may be made of the departments established by him; Shumu Shang (elephant stable) to look after the increasing fleet of royal elephants, Sagol Sang (royal stable) to look after the maintenance of the state horses. War captives were employed to look after the elephants and horses. The Lanmi Yareksang (quarter guard of the army), an improvement, a small beginning of a standing army, Dolai Paba Loisang, the department of Palanquin riders or police, Mayang Hishaba Loisang (department of boat makers), Shangom Sang (royal dairy), Pangan Shanglen (department of Muslim), Shinga Khongbi Loishang (department of musician), Pangan Phunderi (Muslim Turner) Teli Loishang, Department of Teli (oil crusher).

For the administration of justice, he entrusted the village chiefs to administer justice. The criminal cases which could not be settled in the villages were referred to the royal court known as Khagemba Loishang.

Royal ordnanace workshop: He also invented the manufacture of guns in the royal workshop. Gun was bored in 1628 A.D.

Royal Granaries

The king established state granaries in different parts of the state to store food grains to meet the requirements of the people during famine,

drought or other calamities. The granary was known as Kei. The villagers had to contribute certain quota of paddy to the state granaries after retaining their requirements. The rent was twelve pots of paddy per pari (hectare). These suppliers of foodgrains were exempted from military service under the lallup system. The chief of the village was appointed Keirakpa (Keeper of granary). Khagemba established such granaries at Kakyao, Langpok Leihao, Tingri, Koireng Kei, Monsang Kei, Kiyam Kei, Wangoo and Yiharei Kei which became well established villages. Once Khagemba was injured while supervising the construction of a Kei at Lamphel in west Imphal.

New Officers

Due to increase in the workload of the administration and immigration of foreigners in the state, Khagemba erected the following posts, Dolaroi Hanjaba, (head of the palanquin riders), Khabam Shanglen Lakpa, (head of Khabam Pana), four Shanju Lakpa, Khetri Hanjaba, Lairikyengbam Hanjaba (head of the royal scribes).⁵⁴

Economic Development

Khagemba's reign was marked by great agricultural development. The king himself was a great patron of agriculture. With the conquest of Kabaw valley, the natural resources of the kingdom had greatly increased. But in the seventeenth century, the valley of Manipur was a swampy area which required constant draining of the water from the marshes to the river systems. Khagemba took interest in providing irrigation facilities to the people. Rivers and streams were dredged, canals were dug like Kyang Kong (canal of Kyang), Takhen Khong (canal of Tripura) etc. Bunds were constructed to control the flood from the rivers.

Agricultural technology was improved with the introduction of transplanting system of paddy cultivation introduced by Muslim peasants who were war captives. These Muslim peasants introduced the plough drawn by the bullock and buffalo. But the swamps of the valley could not be brought under such improved cultivation system, as the water level was always high. So Khagemba introduced a new paddy known as Taothabi (a red and tailed paddy) which was a quick growing specie planted in the swamps in 1634 A.D.

The revenue system was systematised with the improvement of agricultural production; the cultivators were to pay revenue in form of paddy to the state. The revenue department was put under the Lourungpurel Achouba who supervised the work of Pana Puren and Lourungba Macha. They were paid salary in paddy. Lourungpurel was paid two Kot (granary) of paddy, Pana Puren was paid one Kot (granary) and Lourungba was paid 30 pots of paddy. The king was to be paid 60 pots of paddy per pari (hectare). The land was now owned by the king in theory but the nobles had utilised them by employing peasants who were possessors of these land and payers of rent to the state.

Transportation and communications were improved by Khagemba. Several routes were maintained. Reference is made to a "Makak" road (road to "Makak"). The internal transportation was provided by the riverine network of transportation by boats. The state supervised the boat making as the timber was to be extracted from the forests.

Marketing Centres

Khagemba established ten markets in 1614, Sana Keithel, Kha Keithel, Moirang Keithel, Khuman Keithel, Phaibung Keithel, Chairen Keithel, Namphaon Keithel, Konglang Keithel and Andro Keithel. These markets greatly facilitated the selling and buying of the commodities which were produced with surplus. Manipur's economy had crossed the subsistence economy. The surplus was now traded. There was also long distance trade between Manipur and neighbouring countries including upper Burma and China even.

Establishment of villages

Khagemba took the initiative of establishing villages in strategic places. During his reign, he established the villages of Wangoo, Nungyu, Sugnu, Langthabal, Pallel and Puimei village of Haochong. In that villages, he settled families from the seven clans. These villages were entrusted with some specific works. For example, Sugnu was entrusted to maintain the abode of Wangbren in this village.

Manufacturing Industries

The chronicle records the existence of a class of artisans like blacksmiths, brassmaking and weapon making.

Natural resources and forests were controlled by the state. For example, gold washing in the rivers of Manipur including perhaps, the Chindwin and its tributaries was done and it was a state monopoly. The wax from the forest was controlled by the state. Gold washing was recorded in 1623 A.D. There are references to famine and drought in 1634 when the king and queen went to the countryside to distribute food grains from the state granaries located in different villages.

Currency

Khagemba introduced bell metal currency in the kingdom. Some coins of his reign have been discovered.⁵⁵

Technological Development

Khagemba's reign was marked by a number of technological changes in the country. Manipur was aware of the muskets and guns which were captured by her from the Shans and Burmese. Even Burmese gunners were employed in her army. But gun and gun powder manufacturing was not developed. It is said that Manipur purchased gunpowder from the Chinese. In 1628, the royal workshop was able to carry out the boring of the barrel of the musket. But Manipur could not produce muskets in large quantity.

Brick making was attributed to the reign of Khagemba. And it was learnt from the Chinese. The Chinese name of brick was 'chek' which was included in the Meitei vocabulary. The chronicle records the construction of the gate of the royal fortress with bricks. Silver crowns were cast by the jewellers and silver artisans. Statue making either by wood or copper was already done in Manipur.

Housing technology was further improved. The houses in Manipur were built of wood, bamboo and thatches. Chronicle refers to the construction of phuras or temples for the gods and deities. Five storied houses were constructed. Decoration of the eaves of the temples and royal house known as Moimit Yuba was introduced. In order to strengthen the structure of the house, Khagemba introduced a support to the rafter known as Sana Yumbi.

Innovations

The contact with the Muslims led to the introduction of tobacco smoking and pipe smoking in Manipur though tobacco was already known in Manipur.

Khagemba was a great patron of games and sports. The chronicle records that he introduced the horse hockey or Polo in 1606 A.D.⁵⁶ But it is not a correct claim as horse hockey was already played in Manipur since Kangba's time in the pre-Pakhangba period. The editors of the chronicle explain that the horse hockey introduced by Khagemba might have been Pana Sagol Kangjei or Inter-Pana (district) horse hockey. He also introduced a particular type of turban wearing. He introduced the inter-Pana boat race. There was archery competition. There was race between women also.

Religious Life

Reign of Khagemba was the hey day of the traditional Meitei religion. Thiren Layat or Kaibiron, a religious work gives a vivid account of the Meitei theology and philosophy.⁵⁷ He was a great patron of Sanamahi cult. A contemporary text, Khagemba Langjei is the expression of the supremacy of Sanahami as the Universal God of the Meitei and the belief in Him would bring prosperity to king and the country. It was believed that Khagemba's son Sanahal was an incarnate of Sanamahi himself. Khagemba was a deeply religious king. He sought and got the company and advice of scholar philosophers of the time. The learned scholars who were well known authorities on religion and theology and who attended his court were Apoimacha, Konok Thengra, Salam Sana, Yumnam Tomba and Langon Lukhoi — a sort of six jewels of Khagemba's court. Thiren Layat is a comprehensive treatise on the Meitei traditional religion, ethics and philosophy. According to this treatise, the Meiteis had developed a very strict physical and mental discipline to attain spiritualism. Meitei ethics was spelled out in this text, simple eating, clean and simple clothing and deep meditation on God, respect of the parents, good character and clean food. "Sleep well, eat simple good, be firm." This text mentions about the types of worship: Charot, Korat and Morat: Charot means human sacrifice, Korat means animal sacrifice replacing human sacrifice. Korat was very popular during Khagemba's time. Morat means offering of flower, fruit and fish.

Animal sacrifices to deities, Marjing and Koubru for the prosperity of the king and the country were recorded in the chronicle.⁵⁸ Laiharaoba was also performed. Temple of Nongshaba, a Sun God was constructed in 1633 A.D. His adoption of the title of Laiyingthou, the godly king was the assertion of the divine status of the king. The death anniversaries of the departed persons were performed in a grand way.

During his reign, religious syncretism or dual worship of traditional Meitei Gods and Hindu God was noticed. The statue of Vishnu was installed during the royal boat race during festive occasions. Khagemba was not a Hindu but he did not show any disrespect to the Hindu God.

Worship of fire, water, wind, sun, moon, star and big trees and sun was prevalent in Manipur.

He was advised by the great-scholar-philosophers in his search for knowledge of God and spiritualism. An interesting incident is found in a tradition. Khagemba asked Apoimacha to tell him how to find the immortal God. Apoimacha told him that the answer could be given jointly by the five scholar philosophers, Konok Thengra Salam Sana, Yumnam Tomba, Khaidem Tomba and Apoimacha himself. The five were called to the palace. The king wanted to know the way to the knowledge of God from them. At that moment, one of the upper pillars of the Royal house was broken and it struck Salam Sana to death. Then five tigers jumped out of the roof of the house and mauled five women in the road, five guardsmen of the Kangla, a royal lady and a royal servant to death. While Khagemba was in a confused state of mind, Apoimacha recited the names of the five immortal Gods. Everybody came to life again. Khagemba was very pleased and he was taught by the five scholars. Khagemba wanted to keep the spiritual lesson to himself and thought to kill the five scholars who realized the inner thought of the king. The five scholars told him that they knew what he was thinking and cursed him.⁵⁹ Konok Thengra was a great scholar-astrologer. He predicted that if the foundation of the Kangla was laid on a particular time and hour a golden lotus would come out. But it did not come out. And Khagemba condemned the astrologer to death. But a Muslim who laid his foundation at the exact time and hour prescribed by him reported to the king that the golden lotus came out. Khagemba revoked his order but it was too late. Konok Thengra committed suicide by drowning in the Imphal river.⁶⁰

Literary Efflorescence

R.K. Jhalajit Singh writes, "In Khagemba's time the Manipuri literature came out of the rut into which it had fallen in a previous period and reached new heights. The golden age of Manipuri literature is in the future, not in the past. But the time of Khagemba like a few other times, shines brilliantly in the long and chequered history of Manipuri

literature.”⁶¹ Cheitharol Kumbaba records that reading was introduced by Khagemba. Books were already there as manuscripts which were the monopoly of the scholars and royal scribes. As stated elsewhere, the court of Khagemba had brilliant scholars. However, none of the manuscripts in archaic Meitei script is dated. Khagemba is also reputed to have made certain improvements in the Meitei scripts. During this period of great literary activities, a large number of books were written. Mention may be made of the following remarkable literary works dealing with different subjects: Khagemba Yunglep deals with the cosmogony and creation the geneology of the clans.⁶² Nongsaba Laihui deals with the origin and worship of Nongshaba, a deity for whom a temple was constructed by Khagemba in the palace in 1633.⁶³ More important works were the Leithak Leikharol (of Heavens and Netherworld) which is a compendium of myths and legends, traditions and geneology of the Meitei.⁶⁴ Thawan Michak Khenjanglon (constellation of planets and stars), a collection of legends purporting to explain the origin of constellations, perhaps a work of Konok Thengra, the great astrologer-scholar; Tharon (the Lore of Months), Panthoibi Waron (Goddess of paddy and Her lover), Tharon explains how the names of twelfth months of the Manipuri year were named. N. Khelchandra refers to Shikhan Lakhon, a treatise composed by the five scholars as told to Khagemba on immortality in the battlefield, Kaibaron (or Thiren Layat) which deals with the religion, ethics philosophy and futurology of the royal dynasty.⁶⁵ Khagemba Shingkak is another work dealing with future predictions.

Thus Khagemba's reign was one of the most brilliant epochs in the history of the rising kingdom.

KHUNJAOPA: (1652-66)

After the death of Khagemba in 1652, his son Khunjaoba ascended the throne of Manipur in 1652. The vigorous reign of the father was followed by a short reign of peace and development of the son who ruled only for fifteen years. He inherited a prosperous and powerful kingdom from a great king, and naturally his brief rule was overshadowed by the brilliance of his father's achievements. As one historian writes, “He was essentially a lover of peace. He acted upto his regnal name “Khunjaoba” which literally means one in whose time there is peace and prosperity.”⁶⁶ It was left to Khunjaoba to strengthen and improve the capital as a commercial centre and fortify the royal

palace. But the Meitei kingdom was essentially a military state with the king himself taking the role of the soldier commander. Every ruler tried to go down in history as a warrior or a conqueror. It fitted well into the martial character of the Meitei culture and tradition. Thus in the short reign of fifteen years, Khunjaoba, according to the two royal chronicles, carried out minor military expeditions both in Kabaw Valley and some hill areas within the kingdom. Since the time of Kyamba when this coveted valley was conquered and annexed into Manipur, we find innumerable military expeditions to the Shan principalities from whom were looted war booties, both men, animals and treasures which became a source of revenue for paying the peasant soldiers of the Manipur army. These repeated raids also indicated that despite military control, there was no administrative integration of the valley with mainland Manipur. At the same time, the social relationship between the Meiteis and the Kabaws, despite absorption of the latter into Meitei society, was not very strong. A reason for the lack of intensity in the process of integration was the religious difference. The Kabaw Shans were Buddhists whereas the Meiteis were the followers of their traditional Sanamahi cult. This same attitude was reflected in the separate military expeditions to a large number of hill villages. Subjugation rather than integration appears to be underlying idea of the policy towards the hill tribes. Even a comparatively powerful ruler like Khunjaoba during his uneventful career sent out expeditions to all directions to subjugate the tribal villages. One of the purposes might have been to keep the peasant soldiers of the Lallup engaged in warfare, booties of which were shared by them.

Khunjaoba made certain forages into Samsok in 1653 and 1659, and recovered cattle, buffaloes and elephants as the spoils of the war. Ningthourol Lambuba records a raid over the Chakpa Angoching village near the Chindwin river. The king defeated the Avas and captured their chief Choupha Mangtra. He also raided Mangsa, a small Shan village in Kabaw valley in 1657 which was completely destroyed. There were minor raids.

Khunjaoba sent a large number of expeditions to the tribal villages in the hill areas. In 1652, expeditions were sent to Machou, Yangoi, Mayangkhang and Karou, in 1653 against the Tangkhuls of Itok from which fifteen prisoners were captured, in 1654, against Kuyong and Kabui village of Nungshai and Wainem, Anal and Sharon, fifty prisoners were captured from Sharon.

In 1655, the villages of Karong, Ngaikhong Sarang, Phungbang, Wakching, Lengku, Lengeng, Shikhong, Kamu, Andro and Yairibok were raided by the king with the help of the Itok Tangkhuls.

In the north, the Marams were defeated and their chief Kampong was captured. A group of Thongnang (Kacharis) who came from Maibong in North Cachar hills to invade or migrate to Manipur valley were defeated with the help of Koireng tribesmen. Makhan was also defeated. Ingourok Koireng was defeated. It might be in the nature of collection of tributes by the military expeditions.

Improvement of the Capital

Khunjaoba excavated the moat in front of the royal gate made of brick which was constructed by his father Khagemba. With the moat surrounding the palace, it would have looked like a typical medieval fortified palace. The Nambul river and Naga streams drained the Imphal area. The first one served as a waterway also. So in 1661, the king constructed a small bund along the course of Naga stream to prevent constant overflow of water and flooding the localities to the east and west of it. In 1665, the chronicle records that, the bed of the Nambul river from the Khwairamband market to Chinga hill in south of the capital was dredged to facilitate boat transportation to and from the main market. Drains were dug around the market and bund was also constructed to protect the market from inundation. He also constructed ramparts or fortress at strategic points. In 1660, he constructed a fortress or rampart at Ngaprum village in the western hills.

There was more contact between Manipur and Assam, both trade and migration. In 1660, three families of Kacharis came to settle in Manipur. In 1662, a group of Meiteis who went to Assam arrived. A large number of persons went to Tripura also. Elephants were wanted in Manipur.

The Cheitharol Kumbaba was well recorded, the date, days and months of the occurrence of the events, which were recorded since the time of Khagemba. For example, in September and October of 1664, a comet appeared for two months.

An interesting reference was made to Mera Santuba ceremony or festival in 1658 A.D. Khunjaoba died in 1666 at the age of 45.

PAIKHOMBA (1666-97)

Khunjaoba died issueless in 1666 A.D.; so he was succeeded by Paikhomba, a son of his brother Prince Tonaba in December, 1666.

Paikhomba's original name was Poireikhunghomba but he was renamed Paikhomba after he defeated the village of Paikhu Lamnungshi. He also captured its chief Sakya.

Military Expeditions

Paikhomba had a comparatively a peaceful reign. However, the chronicles record minor military expeditions to Kabaw valley, and the tribal villages in eastern hills inhabited by Tangkhuls, Anals, Moyons and Lamgangs, the Maram in north, Sakang and Nungkong in the South. There was an attempted invasion of Manipur in the eastern frontier by Avas (Burmese) in the south-west by the Tripuris and by Cacharis in the north west. The Ningthourol Lambuba refers to the Manipuri invasion of a Chinese village which produced silk. The chief of that village Choupha Sumlong was taken prisoner. The objective of this military expedition was probably to collect tributes from the villages. Cheitharol Kumbaba records that the king raided Nungkon in December, 1667, Tonsen in 1669, Khanpok in 1671, Monthei in 1673, Moyon in November 1675, Mayangkhang in 1679, Nonghou (Anal Namfow) in November in 1688, Mahou in 1689, again Anal Namfow, Mareipung, Lamgang, Lamthon and Sagang in 1690. He invaded Samsok in 1692 in which he captured fifteen prisoners and seized sheilds, swords, guns, horses. Next year in 1693, an expedition was sent to gather paddy from Samsok. The paddy gathered was kept at the royal granary at Mangsha.

The Burmese made an attempt to invade Manipur across the Chindwin river in 1692. The invading Burmese were driven back. In 1696, the Tripuris who made an incursion into the south-western frontier were defeated and sixteen prisoners were captured.

Development Activities

The king was personally involved in development work carried out by the feudal labour of Lallup system. As the peace in the country was maintained, population also increased due to natural growth and immigration. Therefore, a large tract of swampy land covered by jungles and tall grasses was brought under cultivation. The communication through the rivers by means of boat by dredging the river was maintained. In 1675 he improved the road from Chinga to Phungsanrei. The Nambul river was dredged in 1680. He also

constructed river bunds to prevent floods. In 1695, the king personally inspected the construction of a bund along the Imphal river at Singjamei. There were instances of irrigation of paddy field by the water of the river. There was great interest in the development of industries. In December 1687, five hundred and four men from the Panas of Ahallup, Naharup, Laipham and Khabam along with some Lois and Keis were engaged in brick making in fourteen brick kilns for three months.

The state control over forests and exploitation of forest products, use of salt wells of manufacturing of salt cakes, cutting of timber for making of boats and canoes was fully established. The king sometimes personally went to the forest for making of canoes. In August 1692, one Phamdou, a courtier was caught and put under chain, for cutting timber in the forest of Panta which may be identified with Purumpantha in the hills south of Kakching.

Tiger Menace

Cheitharol Kumbaba made frequent entries about the menace posed by tiger, killing and catching of tiger throughout the reign of Paikhomba. It was suggested that with the increase of population and reclamation of forest and swamps for agriculture purposes, the wild animals specially the tiger in the forest of Imphal valley were greatly disturbed from their jungle hideout. The tigers and the the leopards killed large number of men and animals. The state made a very elaborate arrangement for the capture of tiger, dead or alive from the different parts of the valley. The king once personally caught a leopard alive. He used to go for tiger hunting. Probably it was for facing the tiger menace that the tiger clubs, keirups were established by the peasants in the villages. The members of the keirups tried to protect animals and human beings from tiger and organised tiger hunting-expedition. The king also established dudgeons for keeping the caught tigers. These structures were known as Keishumsang, which later became a synonymous term for prison. Tiger hunting or tiger trapping became highly sophisticated art. The king also encouraged the fighting with swords and spears against tiger. An occasional show of combat between man and animals was organised at the market place.

In the later part of seventeenth century, Manipur valley was a thickly forested area abundant of animals like tigers, leopards, elephants, wildpigs and different kinds of deers. In the succeeding

centuries, the wild animals and the forest would fall prey to man and his needs. The forests were gradually destroyed by the needs of the poor and greed of the rich including the requirements of the state. In the eternal struggle between man and animal, man and nature, man always won to build up his civilisation which was the product of his control over nature.

Other Activities of the State

It appears that the activities of the state were greatly increased. The four administrative divisions (Panas) namely Ahallup, Naharup, Laipham and Khabam were given greater administrative responsibility. New buildings were constructed for these Panas. The Ahallup and Naharup Panas were entrusted to carry out military expeditions. In 1670, muskets were kept at the office of the Nahalup Pana. These were stolen and those who were involved in the theft killed each other. The chronicle records several epidemics like smallpox, draught, destruction of crops by pest and rats and famine. The king used to distribute food grains to the needy people during such natural calamities.

Trade and Commerce: Contact with Foreigners

The chronicle records the long distance trade between Manipur and neighbouring kingdoms, like Tripura, Assam and Burma. The objects of such trade were mostly elephants and horses. The elephant trade was a royal monopoly. The king established elephant stable at Samurou at the centre of the valley. There might have been other items of trade but they are not recorded in the chronicle. Trade and commerce encouraged movement of people between these countries. Many immigrants including Brahmin settlers from Gujarat, Varanasi, Brindavan and Prayag came to Manipur during the reign of Paikhomba. Several groups of pilgrims came to Manipur and went back. One girl from Manipur was married to a chief of Kacharis. In June, 1670 the bride price of this girl named Mayangleima was given in a form of a palanquin. The name of this girl was Keisham Chanu Tangkhonbi. Her mother rejected the bride price and an elephant was given instead. Some Burmese representatives came seeking some brides for their king.

Paikhomba's reign was a successful one. He continued to follow a liberal social policy which was reflected in the matrimonial alliance

with the neighbouring kingdoms. His rule, however, over the conquered people like the Shan and the tribes was not mild. It was more for the extraction of tributes and booties. But he was also sensitive to the suffering and tragedies of the people including the hill tribes during famines. The administration of justice was harsh. There were several instances of murder, theft and violation of state laws. Those who were involved in the theft of Khamenchatpa, a printed silk dhoti awarded by the king were punished by death and the abetter were punished by cutting off his nose. The king was also friendly with the chiefs of the hill tribes. During his reign the tombs from the leikais of the villages were shifted to the community land of the village. A temple for Lai-kasha was constructed. And a girl named Naoroibi Chaobi was married to the deity. Once the king accepted the invitation of a tribal Khulakpa of Laimanai village to a drink. During his reign there were two instances of sighting of two comets (long tail star) in 1680 and in 1695. The custom of raising wooden megaliths for the dead was practised. Paikhomba died in November 1697 on Thursday twenty seven Hiyangei at the age of fifty three after a reign of thirty two years.⁶⁷

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8

The Zenith and the Decline: 1697-1826

Sanskritization and Burma Wars

With the dawn of the eighteenth century, Manipur attained the zenith of her power like the Ahoms of the neighbouring Assam. Manipur also achieved the full development of her culture, economy and state system. Manipur produced brilliant rulers in this century, the greatest of all the kings of the kingdom being Garibaniwaza. This period was a landmark in the social, cultural and religious transformation the impact of which changed the whole social and cultural landscape of Manipur. It was a revolutionary era in which Manipur was converted into Hinduism the echo of the controversies which surrounded this significant religious change was heard in the next two centuries. The political zenith was also marked by the beginning of a powerful process of Sanskritization of society, culture and history, and even the identity of Manipur. In this revolutionary change in Manipur's life, three kings, father, son and a great grandson: Charairongba, Garibaniwaza and Bhagyachandra played very significant roles, the stamp of which was imprinted on the history of Manipur. They were strong and determined rulers who were endowed with great political insights and military prowess which put them in good stead in such a dare devil change in a nation's life. Therefore, the beginning of the 18th century was the dawn of a new era in the history of Manipur.¹

CHARAIRONGBA (1697-1709)

After the death of Paikhomba, his nephew Charairongba, the son of his younger brother Tonsenngamba ascended the throne in 1697 A.D. at the age of 25. The reign of Charairongba which lasted only for thirteen years, was a transition period from the 17th century to the vigorous eighteenth century, a transition from the traditional Meitei social situation to a Hinduised Meitei society. It was a transition to a more mature and powerful feudal system. His reign coincided with the great Hindu proselytising expansion in the north eastern region in the last years of the great Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb. This Hindu expansion was so powerful that even the great Ahoms who reached the climacteric of their power and glory were converted into Shakta Hinduism. But the strength of Charairongba lay in the consolidation of the political power in the hill areas of Manipur and the maintenance of peace in the Kabaw valley in the eastern frontier of his kingdom.

The reign of Charairongba was comparatively peaceful from the military point of view. The military exploits of this king were confined to minor raids on a number of tribal villages in the surrounding hill areas. Constant vigil on the hill tribes was necessary, because the Meitei kings did not impose any direct administration over the hill tribes. The Lallup labour was extracted from the villages which were situated near the valley or near the main trade routes. And in case of their refusal to pay tribute or lallup service the kings sent military expeditions to punish these tribes. Cheitharol Kumbaba records minor expeditions to Mungba, Sakang, Lamkang, Masem, Pellan, Murao, Sugnu, Anal, Satpam, Tingtou, Purum, Tusuk, Maram, Chothe, Nungtek, Nungshai, Loutai, Songpum and Thangan villages. Of these the Marams and the Tushuks were the most powerful among the tribal villages.² The Marams were very prominent tribe in the northern Manipur hills. They committed raid on Waikok village killing 50 villagers including five Meiteis. The Tushuk village was inhabited by the Kharam tribe who fought against the rulers of Moirang in the past.³ Charairongba was a wise king whose attitude towards the hill tribes was a combination of military might and friendship. He organised in 1700 A.D. a big festival in which the hill chiefs from the eastern hills were invited to make friendship with all the nobles of his court. The fruit of such a wise and liberal policy was reaped by his son Garibaniwaza during his fight against the Burmese and the Tripuris.

Peaceful administration

Charairongba was a good administrator. He wanted to systematize the administration of the country. Since the people were mostly illiterate, he wanted to inscribe their administrative decrees and edicts on stone at prominent public places like the temple. The chronicle records that in 1698, the king raised a stone inscription engraving all the administrative rules in the front of the temple of god Kasha.⁴ An inscription for the maintenance of the deity at Konthoujam village which was issued earlier by Khagemba was reissued by Charairongba in the same stone inscription. It was once thought that the inscription was issued by King Charairongba only but the recent study by epigraphists has found that it was issued by the two kings at different periods. The inscription was written in archaic Meitei script and an English version is given below. It deals with the maintenance of Goddess of Konthoujam Haorok and exemption of the Konthoujam lineage from the royal feudal service. The inscription runs thus:

"The Goddess which was brought down by Khaagi Ngamba (Khagemba) due to the unawareness, descended on the seat. As invocation of the Goddess was done, a bright radiance of light frightened the king. Graced by the Goddess with kindness then Konthoujam Haorok once more were pressed into the service. Soraren.

"King Charairongba, in his royal order, proclaimed thus: as long as the sun and moon exist, the Konthoujam lineage will be freed from royal service. MaaibaHika, Khabam Lupka and Lairellakpa Khurachou have written this record. Only Goddess was saved. It is forbidden to the Haokus."⁵

According to the epigraphists, Khaagingamba may be identified with Khagemba (1597-1653). This inscription does not mention any date. Reference has been made to two Charairongbas in the history of Manipur. Ningthoukhomba (1432-67) was also called Charairongba and the second Charairongba ruled from 1697-1709. It was the second Charairongba who reissued this inscription.

The king was involved in the development activities of the kingdom. He went on tours in different parts of the country indulging in hunting and fishing. As Imphal valley was thickly forested area in the early eighteenth century, it was greatly infested with tigers, leopards, wolves and monkeys. The tiger menace was really great. Protection from this menace was the responsibility of the state, specially the monarch. Tiger hunting was very frequent in Manipur.

During the flood and famine, the king gave doles to the needy peasants by distributing paddy stored in the royal granaries known as the Keis. The king himself rode out to the countryside to supervise the harvesting by the peasants. He enforced strict punishments for crimes. Even thieves were condemned to death. The chronicle records that in 1705, eight thieves were sentenced to death by drowning in the Manipur river off Sugnu. He is said to have straightened the Imphal river to beautify the capital.

Contact with the Burmese

Manipur had regular contact with the Burmese and Shans since the conquest of Kabaw valley in the fifteenth century as the Kabaws or the Kathe Shans of the valley were the subjects of the kingdom of Manipur. There was constant trade contact and social relationship between Manipur and Burma. In 1702, the king of Toongoo dynasty of Ava sent emissaries asking for the hand of a Manipuri princess. The outcome of the mission was not recorded. But later events showed that Charairongba gave his daughter Chakpa Makhao Ngambi in marriage to the Burmese king. This marriage ran sour and created a military and diplomatic problem between the two countries. Several Burmese artisans were imported and engaged in the construction of several temples dedicated to both gods and goddesses of the Meitei and Hindu religions. The Burmese word for temple was 'Kyoung' and it was adopted to mean the temple structures. The employment of Burmese artisans is significant as Manipur did not usually use brick and mortar for the construction of dwelling houses but mostly thatch, wood and bamboo. There are references to three storeyed royal dwelling houses and temples which were influenced by the Burmese architecture.

There was a visit of a troupe of Burmese acrobats to Manipur and the Burmese girls did rope walking to the great amazement and amusement of the onlookers in 1706.

Conversion to Vaishnavism

Since the fifteenth century, Vishnu worship was patronised by the king of Manipur. There was a regular flow of Brahmin immigrants to Manipur. The Brahmin scholars had started to exert Sanskritic influence on Manipur's court life specially in the field of astrology. Brahmin scholars were employed by the monarchs for multifarious

works in administrative and religious affairs specially in the performance of rites and rituals. The visiting Brahmins used to get acquaintance with the king or the queen or other members of the royal family. The fact that the visit of Brahmins and Hindu ascetics to Manipur at different periods was recorded in royal chronicle shows that the Brahmins were well received by the king. There are of course many traditions how king Charairongba illtreated these Hindu priests who were not devoted missionaries. However, many of the Brahmins were really devoted to the worship of Vishnu and reading of the Bhagavata Gita. Gradually, King Charairongba was drawn towards Vaishnavism. By temperament Charairongba was a deeply religious person. In April, 1704 (5th of Sajibu, Wednesday), king Charairongba was formally initiated into Vaishnavism by a Brahmin named Krishnacharya who came from Shweta Ganga, Puri.⁶ The Brahmin was accompanied by his wife Krishnamayi and a colleague named Balabhadra Brahmachari and two Shudra servants. The chronicle records that the king and others who were to be converted into the new faith, observed a fast in April, 1704 one day before their conversion to Vaishnavism.⁷ The school of Vaishnavism established to which the king was baptised adopted the worship of Lord Krishna as the main philosophy. Another tradition says that Charairongba accepted the sect of Vaishnavism established by Nimbarkacharya. And the name of the sect introduced in Manipur was called Nimandi.⁸ Charairongba was thus the first Hindu king of Manipur; he adopted the Sanskrit name of Pitambar Singh.

Construction of Temples

Charairongba according to the Cheitharol Kumbaba constructed several temples for Meitei deities like goddess Panthoibi, Sanamahi, (Laiwa Haiba) and others. He cast a bronze statue of Panthoibi. In another instance, a bronze statue of Sanamahi was also made. After his conversion to Hinduism, the king was deeply involved in a spree of building of temples dedicated to Lord Krishna, Kali and others. The Krishna temple which was constructed by him is still in good condition at Brahmapur, a Brahmin locality at Imphal. Some Burmese artisans and architects were employed in the construction of these temples. The Burmese influence of the temple architecture is seen in these temples. Though he became a devout Hindu, he was not a fanatic like his great son Garibaniwaza. He continued to look after the gods and goddesses

of the Meitei cult. Because of the extremely short reign, his religious zeal was not demonstrated and he was rather a cautious Hindu king.

The Cheitharol Kumbaba records that in order to ease the overpopulation in the leikais or villages, the graves of the dead near their homesteads were removed and rebuilt at appropriate places. Earlier, he constructed a memorial over the tomb of king Paikhomba.

Rebellions

His half brother Loyamba was manipulated by some disgruntled elements in his court to rise into rebellion in 1702 to dethrone Charairongba. The conspiracy was disclosed. Loyamba and thirty one accomplices were executed.

Tushuk Rebellion

Tushuk was a Kharam tribal village in the west. They revolted several times but were suppressed. However, the Tushuks were never reconciled to the political situation under Charairongba. The last of their rebellions was in 1709 which was suppressed by Charairongba himself. On his return journey, while he was taking rest near a peepul tree on the bank of the Nambul river, he was struck by a lightning and he fainted. At that time, the father-in-law of his son Mayamba or Pamheiba, perhaps with the connivance of Pamheiba, speared Charairongba to death. Charairongba died at the age of 37 after 13 years of reign.

“The reign of Charairongba is a turning point in the history of Manipur.”⁹ The relation with Burma deteriorated. Manipur’s contact with India became greatly strengthened after his conversion into Vaishnavism. Many Brahmins migrated to Manipur and settled in the kingdom. ‘The reign of Charairongba is the narrow ridge of an important historical watershed.’¹⁰

GARIBANIWAZA (1709-1748)

Garibaniwaza was the greatest king of Manipur. During his long reign of forty years, Manipur had attained the zenith of her glory, military, religious, cultural and literary. Yet no king in Manipur’s history was so controversial than Garibaniwaza, perhaps due to the highly embittered religious controversies of his times in which he was personally

involved and resultant persistent efforts of his religious detractors to malign him. The large quantity of literatures both historical and creative, including religious literatures, now supplemented by the archaeological evidences, specially the coins and a few stone inscriptions, and references in the contemporary chronicles of Burma themselves speak volume for the great achievement of Garibaniwaza who was one of the most prominent rulers of the time in eastern India and Burma. No other ruler in eastern India could boast of such a glorious military conquest in north east India and Burma in the early 18th century. Unfortunately, the myths and traditions have given a twisted picture of this great king. The myths and traditions were very powerful in a society where literacy and scholarship were the monopoly of the privileged few, and much importance was given to them by the colonial writers and following them, by the Indian historians, ranging from R.B. Pemberton, W. McCulloch, James Johnstone to T.C.Hodson and then Abdul Ali, R.M. Nath and A.C. Bannerjee. However, the most recent investigations have now clearly established the correct assessment of the history of this great king of Manipur of whom any country or nation could be really proud of.

Accession

According to Cheitharol Kumbaba, Garibaniwaza ascended the throne of Manipur in August, 1709, forty days after the death of his father.¹¹ He was the eldest of the five sons of the four wives of king Charairongba, by his first queen, Nungthil Chaibi of Sapam family.¹² He was twenty years old at the time of the death of his father. He assumed the title of Thongnang Mayamba. He was born in 1690 A.D.¹³ His mother had already died in 1696,¹⁴ before his father Charairongba became the king in 1697. There were mysterious rumours which became powerful traditions floated in the 18th century about the parentage and early life of Garibaniwaza.

The royal parentage of Garibaniwaza or Pamheiba is well established by the chronicles, and all doubts created by the traditions of the eighteenth century are ill founded and false.¹⁵ During the last days of Paikhomba who adopted Charairongba to succeed him, there were a lot of intrigues in the court which might have compelled his mother and maternal grandfather to ensure the safety of the young prince by keeping him out of the palace in a distant village called Makeng Thangal inhabited by the friendly Thangal tribe in northern hills. After

the death of his mother, when his father Charairongba became the king, the young prince was rediscovered from this village where he stayed for a few years, and was brought back by the king to the palace. His father established the Haomacha Loisang (a department of hill tribes) which was associated with this prince.

The regnal title of the king was "Nongpok Wairang Pamheiba Thongang Mayamba". His name was entered in the chronicle as Mayamba. His more popular names were Pamheiba and Garibaniwaza. The Persian name Garibaniwaza meaning 'kind to the poor' was given to him by Muslim immigrants and was adopted to be used in the coins issued by him. However, in some of his coins issued after conversion to Hinduism, he was described as Mekleswar or Manipureswar.¹⁶ He was given the Hindu name Gopal Singh (a protector or friend of the cow).¹⁷

Military Conquest

J. Roy described Garibaniwaza as the 'mighty Vaishnava ruler and conqueror who styled himself as the refuge of the poor and in whose character is found the rare combination of a martial quality of a Kshatriya and the humility of a Vashanava!'¹⁸ The fame of Garibaniwaza rests on his military conquests which were classified into three fronts: the first was military expedition towards the hill tribes for internal consolidation, the second was the wars against Burma and the third was the war against Tripura. Garibaniwaza was the greatest conqueror and military leader Manipur ever produced.

Expedition to Hill Tribal Areas

Any capable ruler of Manipur always tried to maintain his political control over the hill tribes who also tried to remain as independent as ever. However, after the conquest of Kabaw valley the tribes in the great mountain range between Kabaw valley and Imphal valley, namely, the Tangkhuls, Anals, Mahou, Maring, Taraos, Moyon etc. were imposed upon the Meitei political suzerainty. The tribal villages situated along the routes of communication between Imphal and Kabaw valleys were closely controlled. Likewise, those tribal villages along the routes between Manipur valley and the rest of India, namely, the route through the Kailaam range in the south, the Ngaprum Chingjin routes along the Ijei-irang and Barak rivers across the Tamenglong hills were not properly administered.

His military expeditions could be divided into three phases: the first phase was between 1710-17 before the Burma wars, the second phase was between 1728-33 and the final phase was between 1745-48 A.D. In the first and second phases, Garibaniwaza directed his military expeditions towards the hill tribes. In 1710, he raided Oklu village inhabited by the Anals in the east of Chakpi river and Anal Khullen which came under the Meitei suzerainty during Khagemba's time. He also conquered Nungan Mashet village. Then in 1712, he invaded Tokpa and Naongphow (Anal Namphow) which were Anal villages. In this expedition, according to Cheitharol Kumbaba, the Anals put up a great resistance. Though the Meiteis were successful, their victory was at a heavy cost. 19 warriors were killed and the king accorded state funeral to the dead soldiers.¹⁹ In 1713, the king visited the Tengnoupal hills. Ningthourol Lambuba records the invasion of Sachung village which was a very old village referred to in many chronicles and historical texts though it cannot be identified. Sachung's chief Senkuplen was speared to death by a Meitei nobleman, Mungyang Nahongba and the king himself cut off his head.²⁰ In 1714, Nongwapon and Mahou villages were raided. In the invasion of Mahou village twenty-nine Mahou warriors were captured as war prisoners. In 1716, the king's forces invaded Tangkhul village of Hundung and sixty eight prisoners were captured. In 1717, the king led the raid against the Tangkhul village of Itok. After this conquest, the king made friendship with the Tangkhul chiefs.²¹ After a decade of intensive military campaign in the eastern hills, he followed a policy of friendship towards these tribes during his protracted warfare against the Burmese and the Tripuris. In these foreign wars, many tribal warriors came in thousands to fight for the Manipur army.

After these very crucial wars against the powerful powers, in 1728, Garibaniwaza tried to punish some tribal villages who were not friendly towards the state; the Kabui (Rongmei) village of Nunghsai in the Leimatak basin and the Anal Namphow village which were invaded and punished.

In 1733, the Tangkhuls of Ukhrul and Hundung became restless and the king sent a military expedition to Ukhrul which was conquered by the Meitei forces. Hundung was also conquered. The outcome of the expeditions incurred heavy casualty on the king's forces; the royal chronicle records the death of seventy Meitei soldiers. The defeat of these two big villages was a landmark in the establishment of the Meitei political hegemony over the Tangkhul hills which started feeling

the brunt of the Meitei power. The Ningel inscription of king Garibaniwaza refers to the Khullakpa of Okhrul (Ukhrul).

During the last years of his reign, Garibaniwaza was still engaged in the affairs of the hill tribes. In 1745, the Purums were shifted to the Tarao areas. He sent expeditions to the western hills among the Kabui villages of Laimatak and Ijei besin, namely, Kabui Laphok and Noney which were conquered. In 1748, Garibaniwaza sent an elaborate expedition against the powerful village of Charoichakotlong (Karong) inhabited by the Kabui tribe. They put up barricades made of logs and banana trees. It is said that the Meitei forces performed some rituals and attacked the village which was conquered after a stiff fight. Then the forces of the king proceeded to Rangkhong village on the north bank of Ijei river and destroyed the village. According to oral traditions prevalent among these villages, the king imposed lallup service on them. Ningthourol Lambuba records that the king imposed the lallup service over the hill tribes who were opposed to the feudal services and they tried to avoid it whenever possible, and fought against the military expeditions.²² Krothen village was defeated and tributes in the form of goats and gayal (mithun) were collected from them.

One strong base of his reign was his control over the hill tribes and political support from them. But his religious policy alienated the tribal people gradually. His imposition of the Lallup was a great burden on the tribes of the hills. He also introduced some changes in the administration of the hill areas. In the previous reigns, the chronicles refer to the headmen of the tribal villages as chiefs (ningthou). But from the time of Garibaniwaza onwards, they use the word "Khullakpa" (administrator of the village) to mean the village chiefs. So it is evident that Garibaniwaza introduced the post of the Khullakpa in the hill tribal villages. He extended privileges to the Khullakpas of several villages. Some of them were given the honour of riding the elephants provided by the state like the Chiru Khullakpa and Khullakpa of Noney village.

Burma Wars

The glorious reign of king Garibaniwaza coincided with the declining days of the Toongoo dynasty of Burma. He was the contemporary of the last two kings of the said dynasty, Tanninganwe (1714-33) and Mahadhamma Yaza Dipati (1733-52). Garibaniwaza's repeated invasions of Burma demonstrated the military might of this mountain

kingdom and gave a death blow to the Toongoo dynasty, Garibaniwaza's Burma wars were fought over three decades (1717-48).

The royal chronicles and military accounts, Samjok Ngamba (conquest of Samjok) and Takhen Ngamba (conquest of Tripura) compiled during his reign give detailed informations about the military campaigns of this great warrior king.

Campaigns in Kabaw Valley

Cheitharol Kumbaba records several military expeditions to the Shan principalities in Kabaw conducted by Garibaniwaza. At the time of his accession tributary Shan rulers of the valley were greatly disaffected due to Manipur-Ava tension. Of these principalities, Samjok or Thaungdut was biggest and most powerful. During the reign of Charairongba, the control over Kabaw valley was relaxed and the Burmese greatly encroached on the Kabaw valley villages. The royal chronicles record seven military expeditions against Samjok in 1717, 1718, 1720, 1722, 1737 and 1748.²³ Samjok was a great source of revenue because of the tribute in form of paddy. For any eventual conflict with Ava Manipur's hold over Kabaw valley especially the principality of Samjok was absolutely necessary. However, the repeated military expeditions to Samjok and surrounding villages are recorded.

Though Cheitharol Kumbaba is silent about them, Ningthourol Lambuba and Samjok Ngamba refer to a number of military campaigns in a large number of villages in the eastern frontier of the Kabaw valley against the Burmese and some local Shans. The battles were fought on both banks of the Chindwin river.²⁴ Since the chronicles do not give any dates, we cannot establish the chronology of the military campaigns. The Burmese were defeated in the Shan villages of Laibu, Thokep Loupanthoug, Muwang, Heining, Chanda Khulel and Songsak.

With the conquest of Kabaw valley in 1470 A.D. Manipur became a power to be reckoned with the Shan states in upper Burma. The political and military strength of Manipur affected the political fortunes of these principalities. We had already discounted the claims of Burmese chronicles greatly emphasized by D.G.E. Hall and G.E. Harvey that Manipur was once conquered by the Burmese king Bayinaung (1551-81) and it has been established beyond doubt that Manipur was never conquered during the period of the Toongoo dynasty. King Charairongba gave his daughter Chakpa Makhao

Ngambi to the king of Ava. The princess was illtreated at the court of Ava. One death wish of Charairongba given to Garibaniwaza was the directive to invade Burma and avenge the illtreatment of his sister. Garibniwaza was waiting for the opportunity to defeat the Burmese. So he strengthened his position in the eastern hills and in the Kabaw valley inhabited by the hill tribes and the Shans respectively as indicated above.

Rebuff to King Taininganwa

In 1717, the king of Ava, Taininganwe who ascended the throne in 1714, sent a team of Burmese officials seeking the hand of a Manipuri princess for him. It was a god sent opportunity for Garibaniwaza who had to avenge the illtreatment to his sister. It was an insult to Manipur, because, according to Burmese political and diplomatic ethos, the Burmese rulers would ask the hands of the princess of neighbouring country and if it was given, the political stock was increased in the eye of the people and fellow or tributary rulers. However, Garibaniwaza, instead of outright rejection of the Burmese proposal for the marriage, readily agreed to give a princess to the Burmese king.²⁵ The king informed the emissaries that the princess would be given in the next year and that the Burmese had to receive her at the Chindwin river, the boundary between Manipur and Ava. In the next year at the appointed time and place, Garibaniwaza sent a military force which was disguised as a marriage party to the confluence of the Chindwin and Ru (Yu) rivers. He informed the Burmese king accordingly. The bride receiving party of the Burmese consisted of 300 nobles, women, soldiers and servants.²⁶ At the appointed place, both the parties met; but instead of the bride being presented to the Burmese, the Manipuri force commanded by Usham Koren Keirungba fell on the unsuspecting Burmese who were overwhelmed and defeated at the most unexpected attack. The Manipuri forces captured 90 Burmese males and 110 Burmese women.²⁷ It is said that the king himself supervised the ambush over the Burmese marriage party.²⁸ This rebuff was an act of revenge to the Burmese king for a military contest.

Burmese Invasion of Manipur: 1718

As a retaliation to this disgrace and insult, the Burmese king Taininganwe sent an expeditionary force to invade Manipur. The

Burmese invading army crossed the Chindwin river, penetrated Manipur in early 1718.²⁹ Garibaniwaza himself commanded the Manipuri forces and fought against the invading Burmese army at Wangjing village in the south eastern fringe of the valley of Manipur.³⁰ At that time, the Manipuri cavalry equipped with deadly sling known as arambai was a very effective wing of the Manipuri force. With the help of the cavalry the invading Burmese forces were defeated at the battle of Wangjing. The local people who were captured or oppressed by the Burmese were rescued and given relief by the king. In this battle, 157 Burmese soldiers were captured as prisoners, 160 muskets, 10 horses were taken as war booties.³¹ The Burmese invasion of Manipur valley, after crossing the Chindwin, marching across the Kabaw valley and the Tengnoupal hills was possible because of the weak control of Manipur over Kabaw valley. So the king went personally with several military expeditions to clear the valley of the Burmese penetrators, specially from Samjok which was mentioned above. It is most probably in 1718 that as recorded in Ningthourol Lambuba, Garibaniwaza defeated the Burmese at Khoukep Loupanthong. He captured a Shan Buddhist pagoda, 1000 boats, 10 horse saddles, 200 muskets, Chinese carpets and swords.³² So, during the next five years 1718-23, the king was engaged in reasserting the political power of Manipur and consolidating the same in Kabaw valley.

Burmese Invasion of 1723

In 1723, Burma, in collusion with Tripura made a large scale invasion of Manipur after crossing Kabaw valley and Tengnoupal hills. Manipur was simultaneously invaded by Tripura in the south western part of the valley. The kingdom was faced with grave dangers both from the east and west. Manipur had not faced a greater danger in the past. Only a great ruler like Garibaniwaza endowed with a very able leadership and military skill could face the national danger squarely and maintained cool in such crisis. The Burmese forces under the command of a young prince, Mandra Kengtung Ngamba were encamped at Pallel.³³

Garibaniwaza sent a large force under three commanders, Kopeng Keirunghanba, Gaibhiram Huidromba and Brahmin Chakravartin Sidhanta to defend against the Burmese invaders. The first encounter between the two forces occurred at Kakching near Pallel. The Manipuri detachment under Kabichandra and Puni Singh were out-numbered and

defeated by the Burmese. They retreated to Wangjing to the north of Kakching. When the king heard about the defeat at Kakching, he realised the gravity of the situation; he sent a reinforcement of a large army consisting of 4000 tribal soldiers, 5000 Meitei soldiers, 300 well trained cavalry armed with deadly arambai, with himself at the head of the command. He rode the royal elephant and marched to Wangjing in December, 1723. A fierce battle was fought on the bank of Lokchaoyi stream at Wangjing between the Burmese and Manipuris. The Manipuri forces were divided into three flanks: northern flank under Kopeng Keirunghanba, the southern flank under Gaibhiram Huidromba and the frontal flank under Brahmin Chakravartin Sidhanta. The king was supervising the whole military operation sitting on the back of the royal elephant. The presence of the king himself in the battlefield produced an electrifying effect on the rank and file of the Manipuri forces. The Burmese war elephants proved to be quite formidable for the Manipuri cavalry. At one stage, the Burmese had the upper hand. Ultimately Kopeng Keirunghanba's cavalry and infantry broke through the northern side of the Burmese forces. The cavalry wrought havoc on the Burmese foot soldiers who fled from the battlefield. This retreat put the Burmese forces in complete disarray and they were completely defeated. About 2000 Burmese are reported to have been killed or wounded. The figure appears to have been exaggerated. Finding himself at such a humiliating position, the Burmese general requested King Garibaniwaza (as he was his uncle from his mother's side) for some provision for his army. Garibaniwaza who was a very humane king, took pity on the son of his sister and gave some provision. The next day all the Burmese fled from Wangjing battle field. The Manipuri forces captured a number of Burmese soldiers including one commander named Chouthap, recovered 1000 shields horse saddles, 1000 copper cooking vessels, 30 elephants, 15 palanquins, 15 spears and a number of soldier artisans of the Burmese army.³⁴

In 1724, Garibaniwaza made an invasion of Burma, while repulsing a Burmese force which made incursion in the eastern frontier across the Chindwin river. In 1725, Burma, once again invaded Manipur with 30,000 strong army. But the entire force was defeated.³⁵

After a gap of ten years, in 1735, Garibaniwaza made a prolonged and successful invasion of the kingdom of Burma. He crossed the Chindwin and attacked Myedoo on the bank of the Moo river within Shwebo province of the kingdom. It was a large scale invasion carried out by a king of Manipur beyond the Chindwin. A large number of

people, soldiers and civilians were captured as war prisoners. The whole town or village of Myedoo was destroyed. Four elephants were taken as war booties. A big sack of coral was also recovered. He also attacked Namkham, Taprang and destroyed nine Burmese fortresses. He pushed up to the capital of the province which was destroyed. From the capital, the king captured 6 war elephants, 100 horses 1000 muskets. He also occupied the Soipret pagoda. It was a devastating invasion on Myedoo. These raids were carried out in 1736.³⁶ The Burmese government made a counter invasion of Manipur in 1737. But the forces that were sent to invade Manipur were defeated by Garibaniwaza. The two third of the royal Burmese army were killed including the drunken Burmese general. Garibaniwaza devastated Tabayin the same year.³⁷

Sack of Sagaing, 1738

The most successful invasion of Burma by Ganibaniwaza was in 1738. He crossed the Chindwin with a force of 20,000 men and cavalry, and invaded the kingdom of Ava. King Mahadhamma Yaza Dipati made the full preparations to meet the Manipuri invasion. 85,000 infantry, 3000 horses and 30 elephants were gathered to check the invasion.³⁸ But Garibaniwaza's strong forces dispersed them. The Burmese were encamped at Myedoo, Tabayin and Mingin. The Manipuri forces were stationed at Thalubayan to the west of Sagaing, a city on the Irrawaddy off the capital of Ava. In the ensuing battle, the Burmese forces were defeated and the Manipuri forces conquered Sagaing. G.E. Harvey writes of Garibaniwaza's invasion in 1738, thus "In 1738 when the king garrisoned these two places (Myedu and Tabayin) and Mingin in the Upper Chindwin district against them, they (Manipuris) simply cantered past, camped at Thalunbyu west of Sagaing, burnt every house and monastery up to the walls of Ava, and stormed the stockade built to protect the Kaunghmudaw pagoda slaughtering the garrison like cattle in a pen and killing the commandant, a minister of the Hluttaw Council; the old door leaves of the pagoda's eastern gateway show a gash made by the sword of Gharibaniwaz when he was forcing an entrance."³⁹ According to Ningthourol Lambuba, the gold plated image of Buddha was looted by the Manipuris.

According to Harvey, quoting a Burmese chronicle, Hmannan III p. 385, the Manipuris raided Burma in 1740 but in '1741 they sent an envoy with a jacket for the raja's kinswoman who had been presented

to the Ava harem in 1704' (Chakpi Makhao Nagambi, sister of Garibaniwaza)⁴⁰ But according to Manipuri chronicle, Ningthourol Lambuba, the Burmese king requested a matrimonial alliance with Manipur by seeking the hand of Princess Satyamala, the daughter of Garibniwaza who was suspicious of the motive of the Burmese king with the experience of the ill treatment of his sister. Garibaniwaza proceeded to Burma with full military force and finding that the king was sincere, agreed to give his daughter in marriage to the Burmese king. He entered Ava on the Irrawaddy and performed the marriage ceremony of his daughter Princess Satyamala. Ningthourol Lambuba records that Ava was a port city where a large number of Muslim or foreign traders were carrying on trade. After the marriage, on the request of the Burmese king Garibaniwaza defeated a rebellious tribe known as Koi on his return journey to Manipur.⁴¹

After this marriage, for about a decade there was comparatively peaceful relation between the two countries. There was no more expedition to Burma recorded in Manipur's chronicle. Harvey writes that in 1749, Garibaniwaza made another raid on Burma but finding the Burmese soldiers so numerous that he refrained from any attack of Burmese position; moreover, he was greatly discouraged at the blowing away of his standard. Instead of fight, he presented his daughter to the Burmese king.⁴² But according to the chronicles of Manipur, he had abdicated in 1748 in favour of his son Chit Shai or Ajit Shai. The reactions to these repeated Manipuri invasions of Burma were interesting. Mahadammayaza Dipati, king of Burma, Harvey writes, "angered at his commander's failure to repel the Manipuris, used to expose them in the sun with a sword on their necks, saying, "if a failure like this comes to my golden ears again, I will chastise you with my sword."⁴³ The reason for the repeated Manipuri invasion was wrongly assigned to the religious obsession with Hinduism that they would get blessed if they took bath in the Irrawaddy and charging the Manipuris of oblivious of the consequences of their actions. "Living in an obscure valley knowing nothing of the outside world, they thought themselves heroes, able to take their pleasure of Burma when they willed."⁴⁴ Harvey's analysis of the cause of Burmese invasions of Garibaniwaza was too simplistic. It was Burma who tried to browbeat Manipur in the beginning of the century and Manipur acted in defence of herself and defeated the Burmese aggressors in Manipur and in their own country. If Burma was defeated and she was under incapable rulers, it was neither the fault of Manipur nor of Garibaniwaza. The real reason was

that Manipur was a rising power which was expanding to upper Burma and her raids gave death blow to the Toongoo dynasty.

War against Tripura

In 1723, as noted earlier, there was an alliance between Burma and Tripura to invade Manipur. They invaded Manipur simultaneously. The cause of the alliance has been recorded in Ningthourol Lambuba that the Burmese king wanted to take revenge for the insult inflicted on him by Garibaniwaza who ambushed the unsuspecting Burmese marriage party on the Chindwin and that the King of Tripura, Dharma Manikya had a grudge against Manipur as the latter confiscated the copy of Bhagavata he got from the king of Assam. As a plan of their joint military moves, the Tripuri forces invaded in the south west and encamped themselves at Torbung under the command of their general Chhatrajit Narayan. Garibaniwaza sent a commander named Haobam Aking of Ahallup Pana to check the Tripuri invaders to the south of Moirang. Negotiation for a peaceful settlement was started to buy time while conducting the military campaign against Burma in the south eastern front. But Chhatrajit Narayan refused to make any negotiated settlement. After the Burmese were driven out from Manipur as a result of their defeat at the battle of Wangjing, Garibaniwaza himself went to the western front and defeated the Tripuris who were dispersed and they fled to their country. The royal chronicles and Takhen Ngamba, a historical account of the war against Tripura give details of the war between the two countries. A commander named Pancham Rai was taken prisoner along with others. War booties included 1000 muskets, 100 shields, 1000 bows with quiver of arrows, 15 doolies 5 gongs, a large quantity of clothes. In this battle, the Tripuris were defeated and driven out of Manipur.

Tripura was invaded by king Garibaniwaza in 1727. The Tripura king on this occasion made peace with the king of Manipur. However, the peace terms were not kept. So Manipur invaded Tripura in 1733 and defeated her and captured personers and war booties.⁴⁵ Another skirmish was recorded at the confluence of Tuivai and Gwai river (Barak) between Manipur and Tripura at the southern tip of south Manipur.

After the sacking of Sagaing, there was a request from the Shan king of Pong to give him help in a war against the Burmese recalling the traditional friendly alliance between king Kyamba and king

Khikkhomba of Pong.⁴⁶ Garibaniwaza gave help to the Pong king but nothing is known much of the outcome of the military campaigns in which the religious preceptors were employed. Perhaps, the king of Manipur was encouraging the Shan rulers to throw off the Burmese suzerainty.

Garibaniwaza was the greatest and most successful conqueror in the history of Manipur. The success of Manipur in the wars against Burma and Tripura was due to a number of reasons. Garibaniwaza and his predecessors had built up a strong state system based on a sound economy coupled with sufficient natural resources in Manipur and Kabaw valleys. The lallup system was then perfected. The hill tribes gave a strong support to the king. The most important factor was the well organised military organisation. Manipur did not have a standing army but Manipur was a nation at arms. It was an ever ready militia whose arms and equipment were provided by the individual militiamen. With a sound economic background and a stable government the militia was well organised through the Lallup. Manipur's foot soldiers were well known for skill in swordsmanship, use of spear and personal bravery. However, by the eighteenth century, cavalry had emerged as the strongest arm of the armed forces. Horse or Manipur's ponies were plenty in Manipur valley. Every household could maintain two to three horse riders. Every Manipuri soldier was a foot soldier, a horse soldier, a boatman and a sailor soldier.

But it was the cavalry equipped with the deadly arambai which proved to be the most effective wing of the forces. Manipur cavalry or Cassay horse as it was popularly known in Burma became a terror to all her neighbours. The Manipur army also used some muskets which might not have been numerous despite the reference to the capture of large number of muskets in the chronicles. The leadership of king Garibaniwaza, his military skill and statemanship, who was determined to follow a policy of aggrandisement towards upper Burma was a strong determinant in this military success of Manipur. His policy was a combination of aggrandisement and matrimonial alliance. His military exploits were the most inspiring saga of Manipur's history.

Religious fanaticism could not be a driving force for the military adventures of Garibaniwaza as alleged by G.E. Harvey. True, his religious preceptors were involved in military campaigns and his chief preceptor, Shanta Das must have tried to spread Hinduism in conquered areas of Burma; but the spread of Hinduism was not the objective of the conquests. War was not fought for bathing at the Irrawaddy alone.

Though we do not agree with the biased opinion of the European scholars, we cannot fully discount the enthusiasm aroused by the conversion to Hinduism in the social, political and military activities of Garibaniwaza who was naturally inspired by the Kshatriya ideal of kingship or the ideal deeds of Sri Ramachandra of the Ramayana as he accepted Ramandi cult.

Sanskritisation of Manipur

There was a great Hindu prozelitising activity in north east India in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The prosecution of the Hindus by Emperor Aurangzeb pushed the migration of the Brahmins to hill states which were beyond the influence of the Mughal empire. At the same time, the long conflict between the Mughals and the Ahoms in the seventeenth century encouraged the revivalism of Hinduism in the region. There were two Hindu sects, the Shakta Hinduism and Vaishnavism. The Ahom court of Assam was already under the influence of both Vaishnavism and Shakta Hinduism. So also the Kachari kingdom and Tripura. Manipur had already come into contact with Hinduism in the form of worship of Vishnu since the middle of the fifteenth century. Royal patronage was given to the worship of Vishnu by successive rulers but the Brahmins who migrated to Manipur did more for the spread of Hinduism in this hill state. The first Meitei king who was converted into Vaishnavism was king Charairongba in 1704 A.D.⁴⁷ The chronicle records that despite his conversion to and profession of Hinduism, he could not totally make a break from the traditional Meitei religion and social norm.⁴⁸ It required a man of deep religious commitment and revolutionary spirit like Garibaniwaza to bring about a religious reform in a conservative and tradition bound society like that of the Meiteis. Great as a conqueror, Garibaniwaza was equally great or greater as a religious reformer in the introduction of Hinduism in Manipur. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, Manipur had a heterogeneous population: the Meiteis of Imphal valley were the followers of ancient Meitei religion; the hill tribes of the surrounding hills were the practitioners of the animistic tribal religion and the Shans of Kabaw valley in the eastern frontier were the Buddhists.

Conversion into Vaishnavism

Sanamahi Laikan, a text dealing with the Sanskritization of Manipur during the reign of Garibaniwaza, mentions that the Shakta Brahmins

were trying to convert Charairongba into Shakta Hinduism.⁴⁹ And the king was inclined to accept Shakta Hinduism but for his untimely death in 1709. It appears that there was rivalry among the Brahmins of different Hindu sects in order to influence the king and his court. Charairongba accepted Nimandi or Nimbarka school of Vaishnavism. Sanamahi Laikan says that his son, Garibaniwaza accepted Sakshya religion of Madhavacharya school of Vaishnavism.⁵⁰ However, Cheitharol Kumbaba records that in October, 1717, Graibaniwaza was initiated into Vaisnavism by Guru Gopal Das.⁵¹ Before the conversion, 39 Bairagis arrived at the capital in 1715 and among them was a Brahmin named Sitaram. We do not know much about Guru Gopal Das from whom according to Sanamahi Laikan, Garibaniwaza accepted Vaishnavism.⁵² From this reference nothing is recorded about the preceptor of the king. The royal chronicle records that Guru Gopal Das went back to his country in 1720 A.D.⁵³ The religious zeal of a now convert was demonstrated by the king in the construction of a number of temples dedicated to Lord Krishna and Kalika. After the departure of Guru Gopal Das, the new preceptor appears to be Shanta Das Mahanta Beiragi from Nara Singh Tilla of Sylhet in Bengal.⁵⁴ Myths were later on created by the new missionary that he was summoned by God Sanamahi of the Meitei religion to spread the teachings of Lord Ramachandra in the land of the Meiteis. The fact was that he was one of the Brahmin missionaries of the Ramanandi (Ramandi) cult in eastern India who had to seek new pasture of missionary activities in the barren land of the Meiteis as they were harrassed by Aurangazeb in their own homeland .

Arrival of Shanta Das

King Garibaniwaza followed Vaishnavism for twenty years.⁵⁵ Preaching of Vaishnavism was done now in a large scale. Ascetics, pilgrims and Brahmins arrived as before, but in larger numbers. Cultural contact with Assam was maintained. He popularised the Bhagavat. About two years before his formal initiation some mendicants including the religious preceptor of the king of Assam came to Manipur. Vaishnavism became the state religion of Manipur.⁵⁶ But the chronicle is silent about the date of the arrival of Shanta Das from Sylhet. It must be at the time of or after the departure of Gopal Das from Manipur in 1720. According to one scholar, Shanta Das came to Manipur in 1728 and he was kept as a royal guest.⁵⁷ But according to

Sanamahi Laikan, when Garibaniwaza was following Gaudiya Vaishnavism, Shanta Das came and persuaded the king to accept Ramanandi cult, thus clearly indicating a rivalry between Gopal Das and Shanta Das. And Garibaniwaza was drawn towards Shanta Das and Ramanandi cult.⁵⁸ Perhaps due to the change of the mind of the king Gopal Das left Manipur. Though the king was not formally initiated into Ramanandi cult, with royal patronage Shanta Das began to propagate Vaishnavism. We may note that Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism worships Lord Krishna as the incarnation of Lord Visnu and Ramanandi school worships Sri Rama as the incarnate of Lord Visnu.

Propagation of a new religion was started with full vigour after 1720 under the active guidance of Shanta Das. The king gave charity to all the Brahmins and astrologers. He declared the eating of meat by the people as forbidden. The rearing of pig and keeping of poultry were banned in the capital area. Those who reared such livestock were sent to the countryside. The temples of nine Umanglais (sylvian gods presiding over villages and lineages) were destroyed. However, the king decreed the employment of Brahmins in the worship of royal deities like Nongshaba, Yimthei Lai, Panthoibi, and Taibangkhaiba (Sanamahi) by denying the duty to the traditional priests of the Meiteis. In 1725, Phairel, 20 Sunday, the tombs of the former kings, queens and princes and princesses were opened and the skeletons of the dead bodies were exhumed and cremated again. The ashes were immersed in the Chindwin river.⁵⁹ There was objection to the opening of the tombs as it was a sacrilege for the Meiteis according to their religious customs. These objections were overruled by the king. The chronicle says that the cremation of the dead was introduced from that year.⁶⁰

Burning of the Meitei Puyas

The chronicle does not mention the burning of books in meitei script by Shanta Das or by the king. Such an act was very much doubted by J. Roy and following him R.K. Jhalajit Singh.⁶¹ But this tradition is referred to in a number of works written by the scholars of the Brahminical school. The first reference to the burning of books (popularly known as *Puran Meithaba*) was made by Khumanthem Kaomacha who was a ballad singer turned historian in his '*Manipur Ittibritti*' (1934) and the names of 123 books in manuscripts which were burnt are listed in this work.⁶² This is collaborated by the great

Brahminical scholar Panditraj Atombapu Sharma in his *Pakhangba* (1952). He writes, "the Guru (Shanta Das) burnt all the religious books of the Meiteis to destroy the Meitei religion. Then he said that just like the burning of the books, the Meiteis had to cremate the dead."⁶³ Since the burning of the dead was introduced in 1725 (February, Phairel), the burning of books must be around this time.

The books which were burnt at Uttra Kangla were the following: Taoroinai Yangbi, Pakhangba Yangbi, Pakhangba Naoyom, Sanamahi, Nauyom, Sanamahi Laihui, Taoroinai Picha, Pakhangba, Thiren, Pakhangba Laihui, Sanamahi Laikhan Nongkha, Leithak Leikharol, Leikha Nongkharol, Leichinlon Laikhan Nongkha, Leikha Nonglon Kruthog, Leichinlon Yumbi, Nonglon Yumbi, Nonglon Leicham, Nonglon Kruthong, Nongdon, Longbum, Nongdon Leichinlon, Leiron Yumchatpa, Leichinlon Nauyim, Leipakta Houba Leichinlon, Patal Langbum, Thiren Shakok, Thirel Shingkap, Khunung Shingkap, Thirel Meiram Liba, Thiren Layat, Thirel, Laichan, Thirel Thigokpi, Thiren Kruthong, Leishanghteng Thirel, Yumbi Thirel, Nongmaijing Thirel, Heipok Thirel, Langol Thirel, Kougru Laikhai, Thangjing Laikhei, Chingkhei Shekning, Chinga Langkhei, Lalambung Langkhei, Wangbren Shekning, Nunglon Lambub, Nunglon Yumbi, Nunglon Khra, Nunglon Laicham, Nunglon Yangbi, Shakok Laichan, Khöi Mahou, Langbum Khen, Tanthong Mahou, Lenthong Mahou, Nongpai Mahou, Leihau Mahou, Yumbi Mahou, Thenkhen Mahou, Leichai Mahou, Thenka Mahou, Monglon Mahou, Leiren Mahou, Chakparol Mahou, Hiri Langsung Mahou, Kithum Mahou, Chakparol Thenkaba, Konna Nungbung Koiba, Nongdom Hiri, Khunung Shampum, Thiram Lon, Manat Lon, Chulat Lon, Makak Lon, Hiri Langsunglon, Changkhulon, Khambiron Layat Thengouron, Charap lon, Apok lon, Apok Langbumlon, Langmaiching Chingoiron, Heipok Shingoiron, Chinghtang Chingoiron, Thangjing Chingoiron, Koubru Chingoiron, Liojing Chingoiron, Konjeng Kokphairon, Chongkhu Lambi, Khunung Pungoiron, Khabi Thelenlon, Sbika, Jalit, Khunthok Yengabi, Chingshatlon, Mahou Yangbi, Ulon, Wa lon, Pabot Khangchinglon, Shangbum Laangbumlon, Kri Langsinglong, Thayang Heiboklon, Shingkhall Langkhallon, Shingtapung, Sana Sekning, Poireiton Khunthokpa, Poireiton Ningchjit, Kammoi Yamoi Sekning, Sanamahi Thiren, Pakhangba Khunthok, Nungbi Nongtharon, Waba Langkaton, Kongkha Laichonlon, Shelloi Ningohitlon, Paphan Uhoulon, Numit Khenchonglon, Tha Kenchonglon, Thawan Minchak Khenchonglon, Taoma Hiyang Kollona.

The fact that the names of these manuscripts are known to the 20th century writers as early as 1934 during the heydays of Brahminical Hindu orthodoxy clearly shows that the copies of these books were preserved by the pandits in their private possessions. There is a popular tradition that when the manuscripts were burnt, some specified manuscripts were fire proof and they flew away to different directions which were an indication that those who were engaged to burn the manuscripts, saved many of these manuscripts. It was definitely an unethical action on the part of the king and his preceptor. Lourembam Khongnangthaba, the great scholar philosopher of the Meitei religion strongly objected to this disastrous measure of the king but to no avail.

Destruction of the Abodes of Traditional Deities

In 1726, while the king constructed temples for Krisna and Kalika near the big tank excavated at Wangkhei leikai, he was engaged in a fanatic action of destruction of images of Umanglais (village, clan and lineage presiding deities) and other important deities like Laiyingthou Panthoibi, Sanamahi (Laiwa Haiba), Soraren and Moidonpokpi. These images after being broken, were buried at Mongbahanba where the temple of Hanuman was constructed. There was occurrence of fire at the palace in which a number of structures were burnt down. It appears that there was resentment among the people at this wanton act of the king who was under the spell of the foreign preceptor who was personally responsible for this fanaticism. According to a tradition which was quoted by many historians, Shanta Das went to destroy the abode of the goddess at Heibokching in south Imphal. The goddess tried to kill him. Shanta Das was greatly frightened and he promised to preserve the temple of goddess Hiyangthang Lairemma (who was identified as Devi) to be protected and maintained by the king. After this year of vigorous destruction, the chronicle records that the temple of Laiwa Haiba (Sanamahi) with the statue of the deity was dedicated in 1729,⁶⁴ and in 1733, the temple of Sanamahi which was destroyed earlier was restored.⁶⁵

Intensification of Sanskritisation

The sanskritization campaign of Shanta Das and king Garibaniwaza was very intense and thorough. During one generation, the social, cultural and even the racial identity of the Meities was radically

sanskritized. Shanta Das was a very intellegent Brahmin scholar who was bent on transforming the whole social and political system of Manipur into a Hindu state and society. It started with the renaming of the country into Manipur which was proposed by Shanta Das and accepted by the king and the court, having related to Manipur of the Mahabharata ruled by Babruvahana, son of the great Pandava hero Arjuna.⁶⁶ In 1724, the title of ‘Maharaja’ was given to the king.⁶⁷ And the king was also “Manipureswar”⁶⁸ The king was given a Hindu name, Gopal Singh.⁶⁹ The queen was renamed Gomati Devi. But in the coins issued by the king, the name ‘Garibaniwaza’ occured in the Nagari script. He was described as ‘Manipureswar’ and ‘Mekleswar’ hinting at the naming of the country as “Mekle”.⁷⁰ The name of Queen Gomati also occurs in the coins issued by king. The adoption of the name of “Manipur” for this ancient kingdom was the beginning of the process of Sanskritization brought about by conversion into Vaishnavism.

Adoption of Hindu gotras in the Salai (clan) System

Cheitharol Kumbaba records that the geneology of the clans of the Meities was written under the supervision of Haobam Pukhranba in 1731.⁷¹ But another gencology of the ruling dynasty known as Vanhsavali was prepared⁷² with its mythical connection with the sages of India, specially with Arjuna of the Mahabharata. Shanta Das, according to Sanamahi Laikan introduced the Gotra for the seven Salais or the clans of the Meiteis.⁷³

<i>Salai</i>	<i>Gotra</i>
1. Ningbhouja (The king’s dynasty)	: Shandilya
2. Angom	: Kaushika
3. Chenglei (Sarang Leishangthem)	: Bhardhwaja
4. Luwang	: Kashyap
5. Khuman	: Madhugalya
6. Moirang	: Aitereya
7. Khaba-Nganba	: Gautam

The king and all the Meiteis after conversion were declared as Kshatriyas. The Hinduised Meiteis had become a single caste society. The king’s dynasty had been equated with the Surya vansa or solar

dynasty of Sri Ramachandra of Ramayana as Garibaniwaza's dynasty was founded by Pakhangba, who according to myth was born of a divine cloud egg from the sun and given to Yaibirok.

Identification of Meitei festivals with Hindu festivals

The Meitei festivals were given Hindu names or modified with Hindu form. So, the annual boat race, known as the Heigru Hitongba festival performed in the month of Hiyengei (September) was renamed Jal Yatra. The festival of Ayang Yoiren Iruppa (Bathing) in the month of Wakching (December/January) was converted into an annual Snan (ritual bathing or ablution) at Lilong Sabonpat. The Waira Tenkap festival (archery) in the month of Phairen (February/January) was converted into a Kirtan of Lord Rama. Then the Poirei Apakana of the month of Lamda (March) was converted to Loipam festival. The Kongba Leithong Phatpa ceremony-cum-festival of April (Sajibu) was changed to Vishnu Samkranti. The Ahong Khongching of June (Ingel) was equated or substituted by Ratha Jatra. The offering to the ancestors in the month of September was replaced by Tarpan (Offering to Pritulok). The Wakambung Chingnung Nongombi was substituted by Dasana Kwaktanba of Durga Puja or Dusserah. And Govardhan puja substituted Chanou Hui Chintu (New Harvest).⁷⁴

But the effort of the king and his preceptor to destroy the ancient Meitei religion failed due to opposition by the traditional followers of the ancient religion. Therefore, the king and Shanta Das agreed to the acceptance of Sanamahi as distinct and important God and practice of the old religious ceremony and beliefs though outwardly, the Hindu forms were enforced and accepted. The royal chronicle refers to the initiation of the king into Hinduism first in 1717, the second in 1729 and third in 1737. In the second initiation, the king, his preceptor and other followers immersed at Lilong in Imphal river, which was known as Nongkhrang Iruppa. In 1737, the king and other 300 were initiated to Vaishnavism. The royal chronicle records that the king accepted Pramanth Dharma. We are not sure whether these initiations were conversions to Ramandi cult or the renewal of initiation to Vaishnavism. The king and his preceptor wanted to demonstrate the king's devotion to Vaishnavism and the need to follow him. However, the Manipuri Vaishnavism, whether of Rama cult or Chaitanya school of Vaishnavism had to make a compromise with the Meitei religion.

Social Stratification and Sati

The Meitei society was a casteless society. With the conversion to Vaishnavism, all the Meiteis including the king were declared as Kshatriya. The Brahmins formed a separate caste outside the Meitei society and the non Hindu hill tribes and the Shan Buddhists formed separate social groups outside the Meitei society. Another feature of Garibaniwaza's Sanskritization was the emergence of a princely group known as the Rajkumars who were the children of the wives and concubines of the king. With the great propagation of Vaishnavism by Shanta Das, the Manipuri wives started performing the self immolation at the death of their husbands (Sati Burning). The chronicle refers to the many Sati burnings voluntarily performed by the wives of princes, Brahmins and court nobles. The first recorded case of Sati Burning was in 1726 A.D. When prince Murari died, his two wives performed the Sati by burning themselves to death in the funeral pyre of the dead prince⁷⁵. In 1733, Sapam Khwairakpa died and his wife died along with him.⁷⁶ In 1735, Wahengbam Nongthouba died and his two wives committed Sati.⁷⁷ In 1737, Keirungba Thanogai died and his two wives also burnt themselves to death.⁷⁸ The upper class or caste wives followed this custom of Sati as the new religion had inculcated a strong sense of Hindu womanhood.

At the same time, the inter caste marriage was very rare. Once, the king, in 1746, asked a Shan family to intermarry with the Lairikyengbam family and on refusal to comply with the order of the king, the Shan family consisting of the husband and wife was exiled to Sugnu. In the same year, it was decreed by the king that Napet (Barber) could marry with Dawan. A man was exiled for offering his wife to his Brahmin guru.

The cultural contact with the Hindu world of India was established during his reign. Pilgrimages to the Hindu holy places became a practice. A number of the members of the royal household including princesses went to the Ganges for pilgrimage under escort of the Brahmin priests. The practice of immersing the forehead bones of the cremated persons was also followed.

Religious Fanaticism

Every new convert is a zealot and susceptible to misguidance. So was king Garibaniwaza who tried to destroy Meitei religion through the

physical destruction of the temples and statues of the Meitei gods and goddesses. Those who did not follow the dietary rule of the new faith (abstention from eating of meat) was punished. There are many instances of the punishment of the people for eating beef as late as 1747.

The crowning instance of such a fanaticism was the burning of the Meitei religious manuscripts already mentioned above. The religious conversion was forced on the members of the court after he had made up his mind to accept. The conversion of the people was not fully voluntary. Even in his raids of upper Burma, as recorded by Ningthourol Lambuba, he destroyed a number of Buddhist pagodas and looting of these pagodas and a number of gilded images of the Buddha. Amidst these invasions, he was accompanied by his preceptor, Shanta Das who of course failed to convert the Burmese into his religion. But the resistance of the traditional religion was also quite formidable. Even during his time after the abdication of the throne his own son Chit Sai started persecuting the followers of Ramandi cult. The traditional religion was so strong that Vaishnavism made a compromise with it. And it was described as religious syncretism between Hinduism and Meitei religion. The syncretism was due to defeat of religious fanaticism of the king. Had Garibaniwaza proceeded from the very beginning to effect a religious syncretism as he was compelled to accept at the end of his reign rather than on the sweeping religious fanatical reforms he would have been spared of the criticism of the posterity. But only a king of his eminence could bring Hinduism to Manipur.

Administrative Reforms

The administration of the kingdom was carried on the time honoured political system which was evolved through the centuries. The feudal state system was improved during his reign. The administrative decrees issued by him were incorporated in the Loiyamba Shilyen, Loina Shilon and Phamlon.⁷⁹ The Meitei feudalism was centred around the king and his court. The king's court was greatly influenced by the Brahmin priests, specially the royal preceptor who was involved in all spheres of Manipur's life, be it military, administrative, religious and social. There was a conflict between the traditional Meitei priests represented by Lourembam Khonghangthaba and Vaishnavite preceptor. However, despite the adoption of Hindu titles, the structure

of the monarchy and other governmental apparatus were still traditional system. Rather the political and administrative ethos were definitely Meitei.

Garibaniwaza was a great administrator. He once again systematised the administrative system of the country. In the court, he introduced the Hindu system of ministers known as the Mantris. The Ningel stone inscription of the king (1735) refers to the king as 'Sri Garibaniwaza Maharaj' and his minister named 'Haobamcha Ibungo Mantri'⁸⁰ The office of the mantri or the minister was an additional post created by the king over and above the traditional officials of the Meitei court known as Ningthou Pongbas which were interpreted as something like ministers.

Judicial Reforms

In 1715, early in his reign, he introduced a reform in the judicial administration of the country.⁸¹ R.K. Jhalajit Singh comments on this reform thus, "A most noteworthy event of his reign was his judicial reforms. He saw that if the king himself administered justice, it might not be always possible to do justice. The king was the effective head of the state and in many an important case, reasons of state might dictate the result of the dispute. He, therefore, instructed the administration of justice to the nobles.⁸² The forms of punishment continued to be severe, like the cutting of limbs and exile to penal settlements.

Administrative Departments

The princes of the royal household were usually entrusted with both civil and military duties. The state had elaborately established different departments which were put under the supervision of sons of king Garibaniwaza. For instance, Bharat Shai, the seventh son was given the charge of Pacha Loisang which looked after the royal household. Lands were granted to the head of the Pacha Loisang.

The head of the forest department was Urungpuren. The post of Urungpuren was held by Shatrughana Shai. The revenue department was supervised by the Lourungpuren, the the head of the revenue department. However, this department was supervised by three princes, namely, Haricharan, Shai, Durlabh Shai, Gadadhar Shai.⁸³

There were sixty four nobles known as the Phamdous of the court. The capital was divided into four quarters, namely, Khwai, Yaiskhul,

Wangkhei, and Khurai. Each one of the quarters was under one Lakpa; hence, Khwairakpa, Yaiskullakpa, Wangkheirakpa and Khurailakpa. His eldest son Shyam Shai was holding the post of the prestigious Khwairakpa. Other princes held the posts of the remaining lakpas.

Revenue system

Though the Lallup system was in practice in full swing, the revenue system was greatly reformed. Due to the development of agricultural lands in the valley of Manipur, the records of the land rights were prepared under the department of revenue known as Lourungpurel. The maker of the land record was known as the Loukok Eba (recorder of the field plots). The fee of entry in the record was 50 shels for one hectare of land known as Pari. For those who made fresh reclamation of land was charged an amount or premium of 500 shels; 1000 sels for one Loukhai, 2000 sels for one Loupi. Sel was the currency in Manipur. The rent was 60 pots (two baskets known as Sangbai) per hectare to be given to the state. The officials of the revenue department were given salaries in the form of paddy. The Lourungba, the chief recorder of land rights was given one kot of paddy (kot means barn) and his assistants were given thirty pots of paddy.

Village administration

For the first time, some detailed informations were available about the administration of the villages both in the valley and hills. The Ningel inscription records that the village was under the administrative control of the Khullakpa (the administrator or controller of the village) assisted by the Luplakpa. The office of Khunbu (Owner or head of the village) was also referred to in the inscription. The villages of Andro, Lamolka, Kamu, Purum, Kurumnai, and Ukhrol were under the Khullakpa and Luplakpa of the villages. Kamu, Purum and Ukhrol were tribal villages. Thus the office of Khunbu, Khullakpa and Luplakpa were officially introduced by Garibaniwaza in 1736 among the hill villages.²⁴ Earlier, the heads of the hill villages are referred to as Ningthou (chief or king). The Cheitharol Kumbaba and Ningthourol Lambuba refer to a number of Khullakpas of the hill tribes. The use of both Khunbu and Khullakpa in place of Ningthou was a very significant transformation of the administrative control and relation of the king of Manipur over hill villages and the status of the both the Khunbu and Khullakpa. So

long as the title used was Ningthou, the hill chiefs were independent or autonomous. But Khullakpa was the administrator of the villager and Khunbu was the owner of the village. Originally, the Khunbu was of higher status but due to the importance given or acquired due to the contact with the Meitei king or the state, the Khullakpa gained more power and influence. This does not mean that there was no traditional system of village administration in hill tribes. Khullakpa was the creation of the Meitei state.

Lallup in the Hill Areas

The chronicles refer to the imposition of the Lallup system on the hill tribes who did not favour this system. But the hill tribes had close contact with the king personally. The festival of month of Mera known as the Mera Haojongba, the festival of the tribes was held regularly. It is said that during the Burma invasion of 1723, 4000 hill tribes joined in the Manipuri forces under the command of the king.⁸⁶ The administrative decrees like Loiyamba Shilyen prescribed the tribute to be rendered by the respective tribes who came under the suzerainty of the king. These tribes were given mostly in the form of forest products and agricultural produces. These tributes were symbolically collected to indicate the state control. The lallup was imposed in the villages under their direct control. It was not wanted by the tribes men.

Economy

The reign of Garibaniwaza was economically a prosperous period in the history of Manipur. The king himself engaged in a large number of development activities. The king was a religious reformer, a great conqueror and a great builder of Hindu temples but he undertook a number of public works like the excavation of tanks, named after him as Ningthem Pukhri in east Imphal in 1725. He also constructed a number of buildings at the palace including one 5-storeyed as referred to in the chronicles.

During his reign, a large number of elephants were caught from the wild jungles and also purchased from the neighbouring countries. Horses from China were bought and perhaps from the Chinese caravan merchants by the king. Acquisition of elephants was both for war and ceremonial purposes, and an indicative of the economic power and grandeur of royalty in the kingdom. There was trade with other countries also.

He also ordered the resettlement of the leikais and villages as they had become crowded due to the growth of population. Therefore, the tombs and graves in the leikais were shifted to other areas. Technological development had become rapid; bell metal industry, blacksmithy or iron industry, weapon manufacturing, gun making, tannery, turnery and boatmaking were highly developed.

Currency

The king issued several coins during his long reign. The bell metal coin known as Sel was in circulation.⁸⁶ The barter economy was being gradually replaced by money economy. Manipur had become quite resourceful. There were some silver coins issued along with the bell metal. A large number of coins were discovered some several places in Manipur. The names of the king and queen Gomti were engraved on coins. However, there appears to be lack of standardisation in the minting of the coins. It was found later on that the coins were manufactured in the private mints.

Literary Progress

Manipur made significant progress in the literary development during this period. The Sanskrit and Bengali literatures were translated into Manipuri. From 1717 to 1737, some books (Parvas) of the *Mahabharata* were translated into Manipuri. And some Cantos of the

Ramayana were rendered into Manipuri during the remaining period of reign.⁸⁷ Angom Gopi was a renowned scholar and poet in the court of Garibaniwaza. Apart from his deep knowledge of Manipuri (Meiteilon), he knew Sanskrit and Bengali. He translated Kritibas's *Ramayana* and Gangadas's *Mahabharata* into Manipuri. Parikshit was a Manipuri rendering of a parva of Ganga Das's *Mahabharata*. He also wrote *Aranya Kanda*, *Kishkindiya Kanda* and *Sudar Kanda*, *Lanka Kanda* and *Uttar Kanda*.

There were historical accounts like *Samjok Ngamba* (Conquest of Samjok) written by two authors, Laishram Aroi and Yumaba Atibar. Laishram Aroi personally participated in the expeditions in the expeditions in Kabaw valley and Burma under the command of king Garibaniwaza.⁸⁸ Nungangbam Govindaram was another scholar of Garibaniwaza's court. His greatest work was the history of war against Tripura and Burma called *Takhel Ngamba*, the conquest of Tripura.

Even the genealogies were improved in rendering of the same in 1731 and 1737.⁸⁹

Last Days of Garibaniwaza: Abdication, Exile and Assassination

Garibaniwaza had, according to Chada Laihui,⁹⁰ ten queens. The first queen was Arambam Chanu but the coins engraved the name of only one queen, the third queen, named Gomati Devi. There were eighteen princes by these ten queens. The eldest was Shyam Shai who was deeply devoted to his father. The multiplicity of wives and children made it difficult for any king in the choice of his successor. Garibaniwaza also faced a similar problem. Therefore, his last days were not happy. Due to his religious predilection, he wanted to take to Sanyasa. He wanted to abdicate the throne. The natural successor would have been Shyam Shai, his eldest and most favourite son who had been acting as the Khwairakpa and greatly experienced in the administrative, military and diplomatic affairs of the state. But at the pressure of the third queen, Gomati Devi to whom it is alleged in some traditions he gave promise long ago that her son would be made his successor on the throne of Manipur. The king abdicated and appointed Chit Shai as the king of Manipur. Chit Shai was an ungrateful man who suffered from an inferiority complex. After the abdication from throne, the old king stayed in the outskirts of the palace but he was so popular that the people thronged at his residence along with the popular and favourite prince Shyam Shai. The people regarded the old king as the real king and thus ignoring the new king Chit Shai. A mean prince that he was, Chit Shai felt slighted by his father's popularity and compelled him to go out of the capital and stay at Thanga in Loktak lake where he planted betel nut on experiment. Even when he was living in the capital, he stayed at Kontha in north Imphal and Apong Inghol in east Imphal. His sojourn at Thanga was not allowed by Chit Shai who suspected his father to put Shyam Shai on the throne. So he exiled his own father and his entourage from Thanga to Burma. King Garibaniwaza went to Ava but the Toongoo dynasty was a tottering royal house. The rebellions of the Mons overthrew them from the seat of power. Garibaniwaza, finding no shelter from the court of Ava returned to Manipur.

Chit Shai sent a group of assassins to kill the ex king and party. The group attacked and killed Maharaja Garibaniwaza and eighteen persons including the religious preceptor, Shanta Das. Shyam Shai who

could not bear the scene of slaughter of his dear father drowned himself by jumping into the Chindwin river. Thus ended the life of a great conqueror and king under very tragic circumstances. This is the first instance of the murder of the king by the conspiracy of his son; Chit Shai was the first patricide in the royal history of Manipur.

Garibaniwaza's reign of forty years marked the zenith of Manipur in all aspects: religious reform, military conquest, cultural and literary achievement and a sound economy. His error of judgement in the choice of his successor under duress cost his life and bequeathed a legacy of conspiracy and intrigues in the struggle for capture of power among his sons and successors. His reign was a very creative epoch in Manipur's history. But in course of time Garibaniwaza was also deified by his adoring people for his tremendous achievement; he was worshipped along with Sanamahi and Wangbaren at Sugnu.

BHAGYACHANDRA (1749-1798)

Successors of Garibaniwaza

Chit Shai (1748-52) ruled Manipur for four years. He was very unpopular ruler. He, however, tried to revive the traditional Meitei religion by persecuting the Hindu converts. The chronicle says that the Gauriyas were fined.⁹¹ Chit Shai was so heartless to drive away his old father from Thanga to Burma and conspired the assassination of the old king.⁹² Chit Shai's misdeed of killing his father was exposed and the people became greatly disaffected. Chit Shai's brother Bharat Shai drove out the patricide king from the throne instead of killing him to avoid further bloodshed among the royal brothers and exiled him to Cachar.⁹³ Chit Shai was accompanied by his son Deva Shai and brother Senapati. His last days were very tragic. He died in abject poverty in Jaintia failing to get the British support to recover the throne of Manipur. Again Bharat Shai was driven out of Manipur and exiled to the Shan principality in upper Burma. After the restoration of order with the flight of the sons of the third queen of Garibaniwaza, his Saradha ceremony was performed by one of his sons, Ananta Shai on the bank of the Chindwin river.

Gourshyam (1753-58)

After the expulsion of Bharat Shai, Maramba or Gourshyam, the son of Shyam Shai, the eldest son of Garibaniwaza ascended the throne of

Manipur. The chronicle records the coronation ceremony of this king. The two previous rulers, Chit Shai and Bharat Shai did not perform the coronation ceremonies according to the prescribed rites; though Chit Shai's accession was sanctioned by his father. Gourshyam was assisted by his younger brother Bhagyachandra who was made the crown prince and his uncle Ananta Shai was appointed Senapati. In 1755, Tolentomba who was directly involved in the assassination of king Garibaniwaza was strangled to death by a silken rope.⁹⁴

Burmese Invasions, 1758

After the fall of the Toungoo dynasty in 1752, Alaungpaya, a Burmese nationalist leader from Shwebo rallied the Burmese people to drive away the Mon rebels and occupied Ava. Alaungpaya founded a new ruling dynasty known as Konbaung dynasty (1752-1886). The rise of Konbaung dynasty under Alaungpaya, one of the greatest kings of Burma radically altered the political situation in Burma vis-a-vis Manipur and Bengal. Manipur after the death of Garibaniwaza and consequent quarrels among his successors had ceased to be a strong power and the centre of political gravity. On the other hand, Alaungpaya, the representative of the new Burmese nationalism, was determined to drive away the English traders from Burma and defeat Manipur as revenge for earlier aggressions. So in 1758, a well equipped Burmese expeditionary force equipped with modern arms acquired from the French and the Portuguese was sent by Alaungpaya to invade Manipur. The Burmese king himself commanded the invading army. He proceeded up the Chindwin in a fleet of boats and devastated Kabaw valley. He crossed the Angoching hills and entered Manipur valley at the Aimol pass and defeated the Manipuri forces at Pallel. Alaungpaya proceeded to the capital which was deserted.⁹⁵ After occupying the capital for a few days, Alaungpaya left Manipur as his presence was needed to quell the revolt of the Peguers in lower Burma. According to the Manipur chronicles, the invading Burmese forces were resisted by the Manipuri forces at Tammu in the western fringe of Kabaw valley. They retreated to Kakching and not at Pallel where a battle was fought resulting in the defeat of Manipur. King Gourshyam participated in the battles. Then Prince Bhagyachandra fought against the Burmese at Leishangkhong. The Burmese forces marched to the capital which was under their occupation for nine days in September, 1758.⁹⁶ The king and people fled to the hills and after the departure of

the Burmese returned to the capital. Alaungpaya took a large number of Manipuri prisoners consisting of boatmen, silk worker and silver smiths. The invasion of 1758 was the precursor of the terrible Burmese invasions of Manipur in the second half of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.

Accession of Bhagyachandra

In 1759, Gourshyam abdicated the throne in favour of his younger brother Bhagyachandra with whom he had an understanding that each one of them would have a rule of five years in rotation. It was also believed that Gopurshyam and Bhagyachandra had a joint rule. It was suggested that since Gourshyam was a cripple, he abdicated the throne for the younger brother who ascended the throne in 1759 which was a most crucial period of Manipur's history. Bhagyachandra had a very short reign of three years as he once again abdicated in 1762 as a Brahmin Brahmacharya was killed by his servants. As an atonement, Bhagyachandra stepped down from the throne. And his elder brother Gourshyam once again became the king. In September, 1762, Gourshyam died and Bhagyachandra again became the king.

During the period of three years of his short reign, Bhagyachandra displayed exceptional vigour and competence in restoring the kingdom to normalcy and to a position of strength. He destroyed all the relics of Burmese conquest including a Victory Memorial marking the conquest of Manipur at Thaungdut. In 1760, he commissioned a team of astrologers and scholars under the supervision of Bheigyabati Khumbongcha Maniram Singh and Sidananda, to prepare a calendar based on an Era named Kangleipak Sak which was 971 years in 1760 A.D. The beginning of the era was 789 A.D. (1760-971 = 789 A.D) The astrologers were granted lands and exemption from feudal services to the state. This era was later known as Manipurabda and even used during the reign of Gambhir Singh.⁹⁷

Treaty with the East India Company, 1762

Bhagyachandra was aware of the international political situation specially the conflict between the French and the British in India and Burma during the Seven Years War (1756-63). He also realised that the cause of the defeat of Manipur at the hands of the Burmese was the adoption of more sophisticated European military hardware by the

Burmese. And Manipur had to acquire these weapons if she had to survive the onslaught of the rising Burmese. Manipur's intensive search for European military technology led her to come into contact with the East India Company. In this military and diplomatic activities of the king, the contact established with the Hindus of Bengal as a result of conversion into Hinduism helped him greatly. In 1761, Jai Singh as he was popularly known in eastern India, engaged one Haridas Gossain to explore the means of acquiring arms from the British. The English who were engaged in the Seven Years War, were driven out of Burma by Alaungpaya by massacring the English merchants at Cape Negrais were in search of an ally to open trade with eastern India and Burma. Meanwhile, the deposed ruler, Chit Shai (also known as Ajit Shai, with the help of the king of Tripura, approached the Bengal Government to restore him to the throne of Manipur. Jai Singh heard of this move of Chit Shai and deputed in July, 1761, Haridas Gossain as his emissary (vakil) to Chittagong to meet Henry Vansittart, the chief of the Chittagong Factory with a letter explaining the circumstances of the ouster of Chit Shai. The arrival of Haridas Gossain was an opportunity for the British and the British agreed to give help to Manipur.⁹⁸ The English thought that Manipur would provide a route for a future trade route to China even. A treaty was concluded on 14 September, 1762 between Haridas Gossain, on behalf of Jai Singh, the Raja of Meckley (Manipur) and Henry Verelst, the Chief of Chittagong Factory. The treaty was approved by the Bengal Government on 4 October, 1762. Ananta Shai (Ananda Shah), Podullo Singh and Chitton Singh who were involved in the negotiation, Haridas Gossain, on behalf of Gourshyam who had become Raja of Manipur and Verelst signed another explanatory note on the treaty. The text of the treaty is reproduced below.

1. Jai Singh shall be assisted with such of the English troops, as from time to time can be spared, for the recovery of his lands and effects from the Burmese.
2. For this assistance, Jai Singh is willing and ready to pay, at the immediate end of every month, all the troops in his service so long as they remain in his service.
3. Jai Singh is willing and ready to join the English troops with all his force to obtain full and ample satisfaction for all and every injury the English from time to time suffered at the hands of the Burmese at Negrais, or any other place, during the administration of the Burmese while in possession of Pegu.

4. Jai Singh will consider, from time to time of signing the treaty, the injuries which have been done to the English by the Burmese as injuries done to himself. He will also ever hereafter be ready to resent any new insult or hindrance the English trade or people may meet with at Pegu, Negrais or any other place under the Rajah of Burmah or the Rajah of Pegu—also any other power or Government that may interrupt the free trade of every English subject passing into and through their countries.
5. Jai Singh will, at all time, fully consider enemy of the English as his own enemy and the English shall consider every enemy of Jai Singh as their enemy.
6. Jai Singh shall grant such lands as the English may think proper for the building of a factory and a fort for the transaction of their business and protection of their persons and properties and whatever place the English may choose for their factory and fort. Jai Singh shall also grant to the English free of rent for ever, a distance of a country of eight thousand cubit around such factory and fort.
7. Jai Singh shall grant to the English permission for an open trade into and through the country, free of all duties, hindrance or molestation, and he will ever protect the English in the same.
8. Jai Singh shall not enter into any accommodation with the Burmah Rajah without the action and approbation of the English; nor shall the English enter into a separate and distinct treaty without previously advising Jai Singh.
9. If the English and Manipuri troops are obliged to march against the Burmah Raja to obtain ratification for their mutual injuries and in consequence, make themselves native of the Burmah country and if the English give him full possession of the Burmah country, Jai Singh agrees to make good to the English all much losses as they have even heretofore sustained.”

The alliance was definitely favourable to the English. As per the treaty, in January, 1763, the English sent a detachment of English troops with Henry Verelst himself at its head. The force left Chittagong and reached Khaspur, the capital of Cachar in April, 1763. The English troops had to go back due to rains and pestilence and English war against Mir Kasim the Nawab of Bengal.

In early 1763, Gourshyam sent a team of three negotiators including Ananta Shai and they concluded a memorandum of understanding as a

sequel to the Treaty on September 11, 1763. The king could not give the cost of the English troops. He gave 500 Manipur gold bars known as Sana Tanga valued at Rs.12/- per bar. However, this memorandum indicated the commodities and with its value that would be given to East India Company in Manipur. The Treaty with the English did not produce any favourable result for Manipur and it was allowed to cease to operate. The treaty and the protocol of 1763 give an idea of the economic products and external trade of Manipur. Gourshyam died in 1767 and Jai Singh became the king again.

Revolt of Moirang and Burmese Invasion, 1764

In 1764, the new Burmese king Hsinbyusin (1760-73) invaded Manipur in the Kabaw Valley. The Manipuri forces were defeated at Tamu. The king himself went to the field and fought against the Burmese at Kakching but was defeated. The king fled to Cachar and then to the Ahom kingdom in Assam. The country was devastated by the occupation forces and it was completely deserted by the population. During this moment of national crisis of Manipur, the chief of Moirang, Khellemba or Khelei Nungnang Telheiba rose into a rebellion. Khellemba was the maternal uncle of Bhagyachandra. He attracted the attention of king Garibaniwaza as his sister was married to Shyam Shai, the eldest son of the Meitei king. His skill in archery was acknowledged by king Garibaniwaza and he was called Telheiba (skilled in archery). He participated in the war against Tripura in 1723 and 1734.⁹⁹ During the last days of Garibaniwaza, Khellemba was appointed as the chief of Moirang in 1747.¹⁰⁰ His capital was at Kwakta. During the Burmese invasion of 1758, Bhagyachandra and members of the royal household were given shelter at Moirang for some time. After his accession to the throne in 1759, Bhagyachandra visited Moirang and worshipped at the temple of Thangjing. Khelei Nungnang Telheiba was confirmed as the Chief of Moirang (Moirang Ningthou). In the Burmese invasion of 1764, King Bhagyachandra fled to Assam. And the Cheitharol Kumbaba records that the people took shelter at Moirang. Other members of the royal household including the Maharani went to Assam. In 1865, Khellemba revolted and killed prince Durlabh Shai and others.¹⁰¹ According to R.K. Sanahal Singh, Khellemba requested Bhagyachandra for the cession of some territory to Moirang, which was refused on the advice of Minister Ananta Shai. Khellemba was disappointed and wanted to revolt with the help of the

Burmese. He invited the Burmese to invade Manipur. Now after the flight of King Bhagyachandra from Manipur. Khellemba was the collaborator of the Burmese. It may be recalled that Moirang was already a part of Manipur and he was a member of the court of Manipur as he was appointed a tributary chief of Moirang. In the absence of Bhagyachandra, Khellemba negotiated with the Burmese and he was now made the tributary king of Manipur under the Burmese suzerainty 1765-68 A.D. Khellemba had now fulfilled his ambition of becoming the king of Manipur. He made his capital at Kwakta. He shifted the village of Kiyamgei to Torbung, but a large number of people died in this shifting of the village. Khellemba tried to consolidate his position in Manipur. He sent a military expedition to a tribal village named Sachung. He revived the independence of Moirang and ruled over the whole of Manipur. Soon trouble started in the royal household of Moirang perhaps due to the secret machinations of some of the followers of king Bhagyachandra. His younger brother Chandramani was killed by Khellemba. Bhagyachandra heard about the revolt by a prince of Moirang. Khellemba went to Ava in 1767 where the two sons of Bhagyachandra were kept as hostages. In the absence of Khellemba, Bhagyachandra invaded Manipur from the west. Some of his nobles were murdered by the men of the Meitei King. Moirang was invaded and their forces were defeated. The two sons of Khellemba were also killed. All the migrants from Imphal who were settled forcibly in Moirang by Khellemba returned to the capital.¹⁰² In 1778, Khellemba was also killed while returning from Ava at a place called Khari. Thus ended the revolt of the Moirang chief; so also the last attempt to regain the independence of Moirang failed. Khellemba was a kinsman of the royal family of Manipur who became friendly with the Burmese and accepted their suzerainty thus earning for himself a stigma of a traitor in the eyes of people of the kingdom of Manipur. He is alleged to have written a letter to King Rajeswar of Ahom kingdom of Assam expressing an insinuation regarding the bonafide of King Bhagyachandra himself. He was naturally the most condemned rebel. But in future, the Burmese would adopt a similar pattern of tributary and titular kings chosen from amongst the sons of Bhagyachandra whenever Manipur was conquered by them. If we take into consideration the future behaviour of the Manipuri princes in their scramble for power, the deeds or misdeeds of Khellemba were not a very unusual affair. The scholars of Moirang complain that Khellemba was projected in a prejudicial way by the official historians of Manipur.

Whatever may be, the chauvinistic desire of Moirang to be the master of Manipur kingdom was fulfilled though it did not earn for their chief credit in the eyes of many.

Bhagyachandra in Exile: Ahom-Manipuri Friendship

The failure of the Anglo-Manipur Treaty to provide the British military help to Manipur contributed to the defeat of Manipur during the Burmese invasion in 1764 and resultant flight of King Bhagyachandra also known as Jai Singh to Cachar. The whole country was devastated by the Burmese who carried a large number of Manipuri prisoners to Burma who were settled at Ava, the capital city. Jai Singh did not try to renew the treaty with the East India Company. Rather he wanted to take help from the Ahom ruler of Assam. His attempt was in the right direction. After he left Manipur, he went to Maibong, the capital of Cachari kingdom whose ruler was Shandhikari. Tungkhungiya Buranji gives a fairly good account of Jai Singh's diplomatic move and ultimate success in getting the Ahom help for the liberation of Manipur from the Burmese.¹⁰³ Jai Singh was able to get the support of a powerful minister of the court of the Ahom king Swargadeo Rajeshwar Singh. His name was Kritichandra Barbarua who was practically the king maker of the Ahom court. Both Jai Singh and Shandhikari proceeded to Rangpur, the capital of the Ahoms and in upper Assam. Jai Singh sought the help and friendship of the Ahom king and offered the hand of princess Kuranganayani, his niece and daughter of late king Gourshyam. Kritichandra Barbarua introduced Raja Jai Singh as a Hindu king of Manipur and a descendant of Babruvahana, son of Arjuna of the Mahabharata and recommended to the king to accept the proposal of matrimony from the king of Manipur. King Rajeshwar Singh accepted the proposal and the royal marriage was duly performed. Since Jai Singh was a fugitive king, he could not bear the expenses of the royal marriage. Kritichandra Barbarua acted as the bride's father and met all the expenses. With skill and finesse befitting a king of a cultured country, Jai Singh effected a friendship with the Ahom ruler who agreed to send an expedition to Manipur to drive away the Burmese. This alliance marked the beginning of a period of close relationship between Manipur and Assam.

There is a popular tradition in Manipur¹⁰⁴ that while Jai Singh was in Ahom court, Khellemba who was put up as the tributary ruler of Manipur wrote to Swargadeo Rajeshwar Singh maliciously telling him

that Jai Singh was not a king of Manipur. Rajeshwar Singh in order to test the veracity of this information asked Jai Singh to catch a wild elephant single handed which was an impossible task. But due to divine interjection, the wild elephant was caught by him and Rajeshwar Singh realised his mistake. This tradition is believed by in Manipur to be a historical event.

Ahom Expedition to Manipur "Lat Kata Ran" (Creeper Cutting War)

Rajeshwar Singh sent an expedition from Charaideo in Upper Assam to Manipur across the Naga Hills to help his friend and ally. But the expedition could not penetrate the roadless jungles and mountain ranges. The expedition lost due to lack of food supplies and sickness. The Assam commander, Haranath Senapati Phukan thought it would be prudent to return the forces to Rangpur. The failure of the first expedition did not deter the Ahom king to send another expedition to Manipur via Kachari kingdom in 1767. Though Tungkhungia Buranji is silent about the second expedition, Cheitharol Kumbaba mentions that in 1767, Jai Singh invaded Manipur with a force of eighty thousand Assamese.¹⁰⁵

Before this invasion, Jai Singh was keeping close contact with the people of Manipur, mostly through the cooperation of the hill tribes like Kabuis of western hills of Manipur where he was known as Chingthangkhomba and very popular. The king himself disguised as a Naga visited Manipur before his actual invasion.¹⁰⁶ So in 1767, Jai Singh with the help of the Ahoms regained the throne of Manipur by killing the titular ruler, Khellemba. Two years after Jai Singh's return to Manipur in 1769, the Burmese invaded Manipur unofficially. The invasion was engineered by a Burmese general who concluded peace with Chinese forces. Jai Singh was defeated and fled to the capital for twenty days. The son of Jai Singh, Madhuchandra was taken to Ava as a hostage. In 1770, Kukila was made the titular ruler of Manipur. However, Jai Singh drove away the Burmese and reoccupied the throne. But the Burmese under Hsinyu shin continued to harass Manipur by minor skirmishes till 1782 when Singu Min (1776-82), son of Hsibyushin died. But by 1782, Manipur became completely independent again. Singu Min's attempt to invade Manipur proved to be futile. R.K. Jhalajit Singh writes, "At the end of his reign (Singu Min) Manipur remained as unconquerable as at the beginning."¹⁰⁷ The

Burma wars of the second phase ceased by 1782. For forty years, Bhagyachandra moved heaven and earth to defend against Burmese invasion and liberate Manipur from the foreign rule. Bhagyachandra's fight was a saga of patriotic fight for the liberation and independence of his mother country. Bhagyachandra's war of liberation should be source of inspiration to many freedom loving people anywhere. The repeated Burmese invasions impoverished the country both in resources and population. A large number of people were taken away to Ava. Bhagyachandra was more a liberator rather than a conqueror.

Subjugation of Hill Tribes

After the return to normalcy, Bhagyachandra like any other king of Manipur turned his attention towards the hill tribes. During his flight to Assam and liberation of Manipur, the Kabui tribe of western hills gave a lot of help¹⁰⁸ and he was friendly with them. In the south, the Kukis had started penetrating into Manipur. The king sent an expeditionary force towards Tuiva in the Manipur Mizoram border and defeated the Kuki intruders. A stone inscription was raised to mark the victory over the Kukis (Khongjais). There are many references in the Cheitharol Kumbaba to the acceptance of his suzerainty by the hill tribes. He also constructed a road upto Gwai (Barak) river.¹⁰⁹ The Kukis surrendered to the king and presented bell metal eating plate. Many tribal villages mostly Tangkhul and Kabuis were engaged in the digging of moats around the new capital of Langthabal. Of the Tangkhul chiefs, the Khullakpa (Headman) of Hundung and Ukhrul made friendship with the king. He also made settlement of village for the tribals. He settled the Tangkhul at Puru Pat, the Kharam at Wakok. Huining, Ukhrul and Hundung came to pay respect to the king. Perhaps the Lallup over the hill tribes was continued.

Manipuri Military Assistance During Mayamaria Rebellions

The Mayamarias, a Vaisnavite sect of Upper Assam made a series of revolts against the Ahom kings. In the first revolt, the Mayamaria rebel leader Raghav Moran was killed by Kuranganayani and king Lakshmi Singh was restored. Another rebellion occurred in 1783 during the reign of Gouranath Singh, son of Lakshmi Singh.

In 1786, a more serious rebellion broke out in the form of a civil war. In 1788, Gourinath was compelled to flee to Gauhati and he

frantically sent messages to kings of neighbouring kingdoms including Manipur for help to suppress. King Jai Singh sent a small force to Assam but it was not effective and returned to Manipur. A more urgent message was sent to Jai Singh in 1790 A.D.

Though old in age, Bhagyachandra and his son Madhuchandra led an expeditory force of 500 horse soldiers and 800 foot to help Gourinath. The combined force of Manipur and Ahom Prime Minister Purnanandi attacked Rangpur, the stronghold of the rebels. But the attack failed. And due to the Burmese disturbances in the eastern frontier Jai Singh returned after keeping a detachment in Assam. The royal chronicle records that the soldiers were returned to Manipur after some time. The king punished them for the unauthorised return.¹¹⁰

Propagation of Gaudiya Vaishnavism

Bhagyachandra Singh's reign of forty years was a great landmark in the history of Manipur, in his war of liberation against the Burmese and propagation of the Bengal school of Vaishnavism. His deep religious devotion earned him the title of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra (Royal Saint). After the death of Garibaniwaz and his religious preceptor Shanta Das, the Ramanandi cult declined and the Chaitanya school of Vaisnavism became more popular. Gourshyam, the elder brother of Bhagyachandra could not devote much to religious propagation. It was left to Bhagyachandra to propagate Vaishnavism which became rooted in Manipur during his reign. His own hard struggle for the freedom of his country from the oppressive Burmese, his personal sufferings, the hostage of his sons at the court of the enemy, his own experience in facing dangers and test of his dignity and life in Ahom court made him a great devotee of Lord Krishna. His intense patriotism and devotion to Vaishnavism made him an ideal Kshatriya Vaishnavite king of Manipur.

Installation of the Image of Govindajee, 1776

After his return to Manipur in 1773, he started reorganising the whole country including the religious institutions. When he was in Cachar, he visited Dacca Dakshin, the ancestral home of Shri Chaitanya in Sylhet. He met one Ram Narayan Sharma, a descendent of Upendra Sharma, grand father of Shri Chaitanya. He came to Manipur and saw the construction and installation of Shri Govindajee's image before he

returned to Dacca Dakshin. The most remarkable contribution of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra was the construction and installation of the wooden statue of Shri Govindajee. According to the chronicle and some historical texts on installation of Govindajee, King Bhagyachandra was told in his dream by Lord Krishna to make a statue of Lord Krishna in the form revealed to him in his dream out of the Jackfruit tree of a small hillock called Kaina. After consultations with knowledgeable scholars, he could locate the Jackfruit tree at the Kaina hill. In February, 1776, the chronicle records that the king went to Kaina in search of the Jackfruit tree. After locating the tree in this hill, he gave presents to the family of Panganbam for the help rendered in the discovery of the tree.¹¹¹ The images of Shri Govindajee Shri Bijoy Govinda, Shri Advaita and Shri Gopinath were made out of the Jackfruit tree¹¹² by an wooden statue maker Sapam Lakshman Singh.

The four images of Lord Krishna were worshipped at four different places: Shri Govindajee at the temple at Langthabal palace under the care of Maharaja Bhagyachandra, Shri Bijoy Govinda under the care of Minister Ananta Shai, the uncle of the king, Shri Advaita was worshipped at the second palace at Bishnupur and Shri Gopinath was looked after by Shri Krittidhwaja who was given the title of Kala Raja by the king. The temple was located at Ningthoukhong. Krittidhwaja was the son of Dsaraja, the chief of the Bishnupriyas who accompanied king Bhagyachandra during his refuge in Assam and died there.¹¹³

However, it was after four years in October, 1780 A.D. that when the king was firmly settled at Langthabal that the ritual installation of Shri Govindajee was performed at the Rashmandol of the Langthabal palace.

Ras Leela

The Manipuris worshipped God through dance and music in their traditional religion. When the spirit of Vaishnavism pervaded the whole Hindu community of the kingdom specially the king, it was revealed in his dream, the composition of the Ras Leela. His daughter, Princess Bhimbati, popularly known as Shija Laioibi helped him in composing the dance which was also performed by her in a devotional dance form. Rajrshi Bhagyachandra composed three ras forms and dedicated to Lord Govindajee; they were Kunjaras, Maharas and Basanta ras. Ras forms the heart of the Manipuri classical dance form which is a combination of the traditional Meitei dance forms and

Vaisnavite theme. The king was a great patron of art forms, dance and music, both vocal and instrumental.

Rajarshi Bhagyachandra was formally initiated into Gaudiya Vaishnavism by Shri Rup Parmananda Thakur. There were five preceptors for the propagation of this sect of Vaishnavism, namely, Ganga Narayan, Chakravartin, Krishnacharan, Kunjabihari, Nidhiram Acharya and Ramgopal Beiragi. The first convert was Ngangbam Selungba¹¹⁴ who was initiated by Ramgopal Beiragi. He was followed by Krishnadas Thakur, Adhikari Kamdeva and Shri Rup Parmananda Thakur.

Beginning of Bengali cultural influence

Since the religious preachers were Bengali speakers preaching Bengali school of Vaishnavism, the Hinduisation of Manipur was influenced by Bengali language and literature. The influence of the Brahmins became very strong. The Sanskritization which was started in the first half of the 18th century had been strongly entrenched in Manipur. It came in form of change in dress, food habit and the adoption of the Bengali as medium of religious transaction, either in singing of hymns or writings. The religious and cultural contact with Bengal, specially, places connected with Shri Chaitanya was greatly increased. The Brahmin influence became exceedingly strong. The Kshatriya ideal of kingship which enjoined on the king the twin duties of protecting the cow and the Brahmin had been literally followed by Rajarshi Bhagyachandra that the king himself stepped down from the throne of Manipur twice in 1763 when one Brahmin Brahmachari was killed by a servant and in 1798 when a young Brahmin boy named Kokpei Sharma was executed with his unintentional knowledge.

Bhagyachandra devoted his kingdom to Lord Govindajee and he ruled the kingdom as His trustee. His religious devotion was emulated by his daughter Princess Bhimbavati Majuri who was symbolically married and dedicated to Shri Govindajee. The princess dedicated her life to the worship of Shri Govindajee. She followed her father to Nabadwip where she worshipped Shri Anu Prabhu.

For the common people, Gaudiya Vaishnavism with its emphasis on Sankirtana accompanied with hymn singing and music and dance in Ras form suited them well. The Meities were the lovers of dance and music; their sentiment and emotions were expressed through the devotional songs to Shri Govindajee.

Inter-caste tension, cleavage between the Hindu and the non Hindu subjects emerged during his reign. The domination of the Bengali Brahmins on Manipuri society was complete. The chronicles record the many cases of litigation on the tribal origin of some of the lineages and families which indicated the strict orthodoxy of the Meitei converts to Vaishnavism.

However, the Hindu women were not the blind followers of Sati ideal of Hindu womanhood. The Sati burning which was so popular in Garibaniwazi's time became unpopular. The chronicle records that in 1776 a prince died. His wife failed to die with him and she was exiled to Sugnu,¹¹⁵ But in 1784, another Satidah was recorded. Stratification in the Meitei society in the form of caste system had come to stay. The Brahmins formed a distinct and upper caste; they were a privileged class as they were exempted from cultivation and Lallup feudal service. Patronage was given to them for the religious activities by the king and nobility. The Brahmins were settled in every village throughout the kingdom. The temples which were managed by these Brahmins priests were supported by the people in the village; thus the temples were the centers of religious propagation and feudal control agencies. The Brahmins were addressed as 'Eigya' as a mark of honour.

The Hindu Meiteis were regarded as Kshatriyas. The descendents of the Maharaja and his royal sons called Ningthemachas or Rajkumars and were addressed as Sankhya. The social outcastes were put at the lowest level of untouchable.

People had started using Bengali clothes, dhoties and kurtas.¹¹⁶ However, the traditional Meitei clothes and dresses were used in the ritual occasions. The Meitei woman and her phanek were symbols of the continuity in Meitei sartorial tradition. But the feudal nobles and royalty who had close contacts with the traders from Bengal adopted the Indian clothing style. The Meitei still produced their silk and various kinds of handloom clothes. Since weaving was a secondary but universal cottage industry, the Manipuri women could maintain their identity in dress. But the royalty had almost completely adopted the Bengali style with minimum Meitei ritualistic dresses and costumes.

Religious Syncretism¹¹⁷

"The Meitei had rejected Nimandi and Ramandi cults but accepted Chaitanya Vaishnavism because of Vaishnavite Sankirtanas being a form of worship of Krishna and Radha through hymns of praise /

dramatization of scenes from their lives and sporting in the gardens of Vrindaban. Sankirtanas constitute the soul of Hindu Manipuri culture. This suited the taste of the Meiteis. But the opposition to the Hindu faith by the protagonists of the indigenous gods and goddesses, the old way of worship continued. They worshipped Soraren, Pakhangba, Sanamahi, Leimaren and 363 Umanglais scattered in all parts of Manipur. A religious syncretism had occurred; a fine synthesis had been effected. At the same time, the indigenous Meitei gods and goddesses were identified with that of the Hindu pantheon; thus Soraren, the king of Heaven was equated with Indra, Nongpok Ningthou with Shiva, Panthoibi with Durga or Parvati. Wangbaren, the water god with Varuna etc. The Manipuri Vaishnavism was not purely a brand transplanted from Bengal, it was adapted to suit the local tastes and ideas which showed the vitality and accommodating qualities of Hinduism. Regarding the impact of Hinduism on the Meitei, A Lyall writes "The olden religious ideas still survive beneath the surface of the philosophical system borrowed from India, and in reality influence to a large extent the lives and sentiment of the people."

Administration

Bhagyachandra was definitely a good administrator. Even during the repeated Burmese occupation of the kingdom, he was able to run the administration very efficiently. An added advantage was the extreme popularity with his subjects and attractive personality. He had support from every circle, even in Moirang whose chief Khellei Nungnang Telheiba revolted and became the king of Manipur with Burmese help, Bhagyachandra was supported by the very brother of the Moirang king, Chandramani who was killed for his support for Bhagyachandra. Reference has been made to 94 wives or concubines of the king. The marriages were political alliances with different kin and lineages groups through matrimony. Polygamy was in existence in Manipur from very early times. But we find king Pamheiba having a large number of queens.

Administrative Reforms

In normal times, Bhagyachandra revived all the administrative institutions which were introduced since the time of Loiyamba in the 12th century. In the supplement to the decrees and codes framed earlier

like Loiyamba Shilen, Mashin and Phamlon, the ancient traditional administrative arrangements were systematised. Bhagyachandra, while ruling from Langthabal capital revived the departments and courts of justice.¹¹⁸

- i) Langdai Kaibiron Shanglen.
- ii) Ngamdai Shat Thaba Shanglen.
- iii) Cheirap (court).
- iv) Kuchu.
- v) Gaudiya Shinba Shanglen (department of religious affairs)
- vi) Apan Shanglen (department of women's affairs).

Keirunghanba, Lourungpurel, Urungpuren (civil supplies, revenue and forest) were important departments which were under the supervision of royal princes.

The post of minister was still held with distinction and competence by the king's uncle Ananta Shai. It is said that the land tenural system was improving with the help of a prince of Rangamati, named locally Koireng Khullakpa. The land survey, documentation of land holdings, rates of revenue and rents and premium for the newly reclaimed lands were already introduced during the time of Garibaniwaz. Bhagyachandra improved upon it with the experience of Bengal and Assam.

The armed forces were still the militia based on the Lallup. When he was in Ahom court, the king perhaps studied the Ahom system of administration. Certain offices of Ahom system like the Rajkhowa and Hazari were introduced. The offices of the Yubaraj (crown prince), Senapati (general), Mantri (minister) were created during Garibaniwaz's reign and continued ever since.

The revenue was collected mostly in forms of paddy from the cultivable fields, services from the subjects and tributes from the hill tribes. Coins were circulated by Maharaja Bhagyachandra. Coins with the name, Jai Singh, another name of the king were discovered in many places of Manipur. The monetization of the economy continued. The trade and commerce with the neighbouring countries expanded. The memorandum of understanding signed between the East India Company and King Gourshyam listed the items of exports and value of goods which gives a fair idea of the commerce of the country in the eighteenth century.

Capital of Manipur

During the fight against the Burmese, Bhagyachandra was not able to locate the capital at a single place. The chronicle refers to a number of capitals. After his return from Cachar in 1764, Jai Singh made his capital at Shangaithel which was renamed Joy Nagar for one year. Then he shifted the capital to Sangaibrow at the outskirts of Imphal. Then came the devastation by the Burmese invading hordes.

In 1775, he made a capital at Lammangdong (Bishenpur) for four years; then he moved to Langthabal in 1779 which was his capital for 17 years. From Langthabal, the capital was shifted to Konthoujum Impham, near the Kangla (the present site of Raj Bhavan at Imphal). He did not reoccupy the Kangla, the ancient capital. Most of the administration was run from Langthabal.

The boundaries of Manipur at the end of his Burmese war were the same with that of Pamheiba's kingdom. The eastern boundary was the Chindwin and the western boundary was the Barak and the southern boundary was the Chin hills and Tuivai basin and Mizoram boundary. The northern boundary was not clear, so also the western boundary.

The chronicles record the manufacture of muskets in 1782, blacksmithy was developed. The king was engaged in the construction of roads. The road from Lilong to Ushoipokpi was constructed in 1892.

Chandrabda Era

In 1760 A.D. the king as noted above entrusted Maniram Pandit Sidhanta to prepare a calendar. The calendar was prepared by the pandit and his associates based on an era known as Kangleipak Sak or Manipur era which was renamed as Chandrabda. The era was started counting year from 789 A.D. about which some discussions were made in the chapter on Pakhangba.

Last Days of Bhagyachandra

Out of the 94 wives and concubines of Bhagyachandra, eight were queens. The first queen had three sons one of whom was Labanyachandra. The second queen's son was Modhuchandra. The third queen, Chingakham Chanu was mother of Chourajit. Marjit was the son of the fourth queen. Gambhir Singh was the son of the fifth queen, Khumbongmayum Chanu. In his old age, a young Brahmin was

executed. Out of remorse, the king abdicated the throne and went to live in Murshidabad in Bengal.¹¹⁹ He devoted to the propagation of Vaishnavism in Bengal where Shakta Hinduism was in the upper hand. He died there in 1799.¹²⁰

Instability and Burmese Conquest

Since Bhagyachandra's death in 1799 and accession of his eldest son Labanyachandra, the history of Manipur assumed a pattern of political instability due to fratricidal conflicts among the sons of Bhagyachandra which brought in foreign intervention and ultimately, the Burmese conquest of Manipur. Though the struggles did not plunge into a protracted civil war like the Maomaria rebellions in neighbouring Assam, the political instability weakened the state structure and the monarchy on whose leadership the fortune of the kingdom depended much. Such fratricidal conflicts surfaced first after the abdication of Garibaniwaza in 1748 A.D., but the strong rule of Bhagyachandra restored order in Manipur. However, the system of a brother succeeding a brother in the accession to the throne which was followed since the middle of the eighteenth century and continued after the death of Bhagyachandra encouraged the intrigues and conspiracies among the ambitious royal princes whose love for power knew no bounds. At the same time, Manipur was faced with the rising Burmese imperialism in the east and the British expansionism in the west which affected the fortunes of the kingdoms and principalities in north east India including Manipur.

LABANYACHANDRA (1798-1801)

During the absence of his father, the crown prince Labanyachandra administered the country very efficiently. He appeared to be a vigorous and well meaning ruler. The chronicle records his active administration. He also gave great encouragement to technological development. The casting of bell metal into a gong was successfully done on his instruction.

He ascended the throne at the mature age of 44. With the help of his uncle Mahasingh Katwan he tried to restore and revive the important religious places in the ancient Kangla, the capital of the kingdom which was deserted for thirty five years. He also constructed a royal residential building at the Kangla. This was a significant and

symbolic return to the ancient seat of power of the Meiteis which was occupied in June, 1799 A.D. It is intriguing why Bhagyachandra did not try to occupy Kangla after he left Langthabal and moved to Konthoujam Impham at the outskirts of the Kangla. Labanyachandra also started the construction of the fort at the Kangla. He organised the death anniversary of Maharaja Bhagyachandra for seven days. The common people were entertained and given charity.

In December, 1799, the Burmese, after almost two decades of peace intruded in the Kabaw valley and burnt down the town of Tamu which was within the territorial boundary of Manipur. The chief of Tamu rushed to the capital to report the Burmese invasion to the king. Labanyachandra himself led a force to drive away the invading Burmese. It was a successful campaign. Perhaps it was a small raid carried out by some frontier officials of Burma. Several tribal villages of Tangkhul and Monthei tribes presented tributes to the king. There was a brisk trade and commerce between Manipur and Burma.

Assassination

In November, 1800, one Daoji and Gambhir Singh a cousin of the king hatched a conspiracy. One day in November, when king Labanyachandra was returning from a game of polo, he was assassinated by Angom Chandramani, perhaps a henchman of Gambhir Singh. This was a bad omen for the ruling dynasty of Manipur.

MODHUCHANDRA (1801-1804)

The third son of Bhagyachandra, Modhuchandra, who was Senapati for many years under his father ascended the throne which he immediately occupied when he heard of the assassination of king Labanyachandra. Gambhir Singh who was a capable but an inexperienced and over ambitious prince kept a low profile for some time. Modhuchandra, 36 years old, had already demonstrated his talents as a military leader during the expedition to upper Assam. He also accompanied his father during his pilgrimage to Nabadwip. His father was perhaps trying to groom him up to support his eldest brother Labanyachandra.

Modhuchandra anticipating trouble from his royal brothers tried to placate them. He appointed Chourajit, his half brother as Yubaraj and Marjit Singh as Senapati. Soon conflict started in 1802 when Yubaraj Chaurajit revolted against the king. He was defeated and he fled to

Cachar. The chronicle records that two officials were deported to refrain the flying princes from the self exile. The compromise plan failed.

Modhuchandra gave his daughter Indu Prabha in marriage to Krishnachandra, the king of Cachar. The royal chronicle records that the arrival of the Chief Minister of Cachar and 275 men to bring fish for the queen of Cachar.¹²¹ Modhuchandra's son prince Pheijao escorted his sister, the queen of Cachar.¹²² The alliance was thus effected during the reign of Modhuchandra, not after his overthrow by Chourajit Singh as J. Roy makes us to believe.¹²³ Meanwhile Chourajit invaded Manipur and defeated Modhuchandra at the battle of Sanjenthong. Modhuchandra fled to his ally Krishnachandra.

CHAURAJIT SINGH (1804-1813)

Chaurajit Singh ascended the throne in February, 1804. He inaugurated a vigorous reign which was displayed in his grand schemes. He made Marjit, the Yubaraj as he supported him in his revolt against Modhuchandra.

Invasion of Modhuchandra

In June, 1804. Modhuchandra with the military assistance from king Krishnachandra of Cachar invaded Manipur to regain the throne. Chaurajit deputed Marjit to resist the invading forces. Marjit was encamped at Keinou and Modhuchandra was encamped at Shamupan. Chaurajit joined Marjit in the front. The battle was fought at the village of Shamupan. Modhuchandra and the Cachar forces were defeated. Modhuchandra was killed.¹²⁴

Beautification of the Place

The beautification of the royal palace was taken up in right earnest. He constructed the Lion like animal statue in front of the Uttra in the Kangla. The temple of Navaratna was constructed. Other temples in the Kangla were constructed: Nonghum Shang, Mongba Shang. The temples of Govindajee, the dancing hall, royal residence were also constructed, the decorated throne of the king was constructed.

His coronation ceremony was performed in a grand scale. At the time of coronation, he was 27 years. His regnal title was Bhallok.

Wairang Pambeiba. After the coronation, a royal residential building with eighty four pillars was constructed for the royal family.

The royal chronicle records the making of carpet of ivory. Thus economic prosperity returned to the country. Trade and commerce were developed. The Chinese traders from Yunan visited Manipur regularly, so also the Shans and Burmese. The trade with Assam, Cachar, Tripura were in progress. Chourajit made a second capital at Tendongyang.

Marjit's Rebellion

Marjit was an exceedingly ambitious young prince. Though Chaurajit was of mild disposition, he was quite firm in handling political and military issues. Taking advantage of kind hearted nature of Chaurajit, Marjit a young man of 24 conspired to capture power with the help of 273 men of 32 households. Having failed in the conspiracy, he escaped to Burma. Chaurajit sent several emissaries to persuade Marjit to return to Manipur. He invaded Manipur from Tamu. The invading forces came upto the capital. Chaurajit in order to avoid bloodshed offered to partition the country that Marjit might rule from Moirang. Marjit turned down the offer. He personally led the attack on the capital and the royal palace which was under the command of king Chaurajit himself. There was a fierce hand to hand fighting. The king was attacked by Marjit on a horse. Chaurajit cut off the reins of the horse. Marjit fell on the ground and fled. His forces were defeated and dispersed. Three hundred Shans were captured. Perhaps, the invading forces was collected by Marjit from the Shans of Kabaw valley.¹²⁵ Marjit fled to Cachar and tried to get the help from king Krishnachandra and his brother Govindchandra. Marjit brought a few horses for presentation to them. Govindchandra confiscated all the horses. Marjit was thus humiliated. And having failed in his mission, he fled to Burma to get help from Emperor Bawdawpaya to dislodge his brother Chaurajit from the throne of Manipur. He spent seven years in the court of Ava, making friendship with Burmese princes. He lived in the luxuries of the Burmese court. He picked up Burmese manners and he was fond of things of Burmese.

Ultimately in 1813, the Burmese Emperor agreed to send a military expedition to conquer Manipur. The expedition was accompanied by Marjit Singh. Burmese forces marched to Kakching via Imole pass. Another division led by the Tsawbwa of Samjok marched to Heirok via

Machi route. Patambar Singh, a nephew of Marjit Singh defeated the Shans at Heirok.

But the Manipuri forces were defeated by the Burmese forces which were well equipped. The Manipuri forces retreated from Kakching. King Chaurajit and prince Gambhir Singh fled to Cachar to take refuge there. Marjit was installed as the king of Manipur in 1813 by the Burmese by accepting their suzerainty and by ceding Kabaw valley to Burma.

Marjit Singh's actions made him appear as a traitor in the eye of the people. He bargained his independence and Kabaw valley for the kingship of Manipur. He was never popular with the people. He had to repent very soon.

MARJIT SINGH (1813-1819)

Marjit Singh was a mean and scheming prince without any sense of patriotism and propriety who bargained away the Kabaw valley and sovereignty to the Burmese Emperor Bawdawpaya for making him the king of his country. With the Burmese pleased with their occupation of Kabaw valley, and in the absence of his rivals in Manipur Marjit had a comparatively peaceful reign of six years.

But he was never satisfied with his status of a vassal ruler under the Burmese suzerainty. Never before him, except Khellemba, the Burmese sezerainty was never accepted any king of Manipur. However, he was greatly influenced by the Burmese culture and their manners. He spent nearly ten years during his impressionable years in the luxuries of royal court of Ava. Prosperity returned to the land. The Manipuris who left Manipur along with Chourajit Singh returned to Manipur. He also made some developmental works, the most prominent being the construction of the brick pillared rampart of the Kangla Fort in 1815 to build up a walled palace, perhaps after the Burmese model. He also beautified the palace by constructing two fabulous lion like animals in stone which were referred to as a dragons after such mythical animal structure in Burma.¹²⁶ The dragon was introduced as the state emblem.¹²⁷

Invasion of Cachar

Not content with his titular status in Manipur, Marjit Singh, in order to avenge the insult he suffered at the hands of Govindchandra, the king

of Cachar who as a crown prince confiscated the horses of Marjit, invaded Cachar in 1818. At that time, the weak but crafty Kachari king Govindchandra, realising their enmity with Marjit appealed to Chourajit who was in Jaintia and Gambhir Singh who was in North Cachar for help against Marjit Singh. The two royal brothers responded to the appeal and agreed to fight against the king of Manipur. Marjit never anticipated such a situation. When the Manipuri forces learnt that their former king Chourajit Singh and his half brother Gambhir Singh were on the opposite sides were hesitant to fight. J. Roy writes, "Marjit failed to earn much regard from his people. That became apparent at the time of his invasion of Cachar in 1818. The numerical strength of his forces was so much superior to the combined allies of Govind Chandra, Chaurajit and Gambhir Singh that he could have easily occupied Cachar. But when it became known to his forces that they would have to fight against Chaurajit and Gambhir Singh, no allurements could stir up any enthusiasm in them to fight. Marjit was quick to realise the workings of their mind fight. Marjit was quick to realise the workings of their mind and to prevent further calamities, he hurried back to Manipur."¹²⁸

Marjit's invasion of Cachar ended in a fiasco. However, the royal chronicle records that the invasion was successful.¹²⁹

Burmese Conquest of Manipur, 1819

With the fiasco in the invasion of Cachar, Marjit who was gradually asserting himself as an independent ruler making his vassalage under the Burmese a mere promise, tried to penetrate in the Kabaw valley. He permitted the people to cut teak timber in Kabaw valley which was already ceded by him to Burma. But his action was miscalculated as a powerful empire under Badawpaya would never allow a vassal ruler to assert his independence in this manner. In 1818, he constructed gilded royal residence with seven rooms. The house was roofed with planks which were gilded. This was taken as an offence by the Burmese ruler. Though his patriotism was commendable, his action brought down the wrath of the Burmese on Manipur. Badawpaya, the mentor of Marjit who was offended at the action of Marjit died in 1819 and was succeeded by his grandson Bagyidaw (1819-37). Burma was at the zenith of her power. The new king summoned the Manipur king to be present at his coronation ceremony at Ava and pay homage to him which was customary for any vassal ruler in Burma. Marjit perhaps

realising the reprisals he might receive from the Burmese defied the royal summon and refused to attend the ceremony on the plea that he apprehended troubles from his brothers Chaurajit Singh and Gambhir Singh.

So Bagyidaw sent an invasion army under the command of General Maha Bandula, one of the greatest Burmese generals in the history to conquer Manipur. The outcome was a foregone conclusion, Marjit Singh was defeated and he fled to Cachar. The Burmese invasion of Manipur was a part of a greater plan of conquest of North East India and even Bengal. The Burmese conquest of Manipur in 1819 was different in intention and character from their earlier invasions. This time, they meant to rule Manipur through their puppet rulers. Thus Manipur was brought under the Burmese rule for seven years (1819-26) which is known as the seven years devastation in history of Manipur. The flight of Marjit from Manipur and Burmese conquest in 1819 marks the end of the mediæval period in the history of Manipur.¹³⁰

Manipuri Princes in Cachar

Cachar provided the refuge for the kings and princes who were in distress and were displeased by internal quarrels among themselves or the Burmese invasion since the middle of eighteenth century. Now in the early nineteenth century, the Manipuri princes after being dislodged from Manipur made Cachar a springboard for the reconquest of Manipur. Chaurajit Singh, Gambhir Singh and other were already there since 1812. Chaurajit Singh could not get friendship from Govindchandra, the successor of Krishnachandra and went to Jaintia. Gambhir Singh also befriended Tularam Senapati, who revolted against Govindchandra and became practically the ruler of North Cachar. When Marjit fled to Cachar in 1819 he also joined the ranks of the refuge princes. He brought the image of Govinda and presented it to Chaurajit Singh. The three brothers were reconciled for some time. After invasion of Cachar by Marjit the combined forces of Chaurajit and Gambhir Singh occupied Cachar to the great chagrin of Govind Chandra who invited them. In 1819, the three brothers occupied Cachar and drove out Govind Chandra to Sylhet and appealed to the Supreme Government of British India to annex Cachar. The East India Company refused to interfere in the affairs of Cachar as they were following a policy of non-interference in the North East India. The kingdom of Cachar which was divided between Govind Chandra and

Chaurajit in 1818, was repartitioned after the flight of Govind Chandra among the three Manipuri princes. Chaurajit got the eastern portion of Cachar bordering Manipur which was ruled from Sonai. Gambhir Singh was given the land west of Tilain hill and his headquarters was at Gumrah, Marjit ruled Hailkandi from Jhapirband.¹³¹ The princes of Manipur quarrelled among themselves and in 1823, Gambhir Singh occupied the whole of Cachar and Chaurajit took shelter in Sylhet. Of course, Marjit was allowed to continue his administration under Gambhir Singh.

BURMESE REIGN OF TERROR: THE SEVEN YEARS DEVASTATION (1819-26)

Manipur had never before faced such a national catastrophe brought about by the Burmese conquest. The oppression and cruelties with which the Burmese dealt with Manipur had no parallel in history of Manipur. It was a sort of genocide of the Meiteis that had been carried by the Burmese reign of terror. This is known in history of Manipur as Chahi Taret Khuntakpa: Seven years Devastation. The country was depopulated. One third of the population accompanied Marjit Singh in his flight to Cachar, a sizeable section took refuge in the western hills of Manipur, and the rest lived in great fear of the Burmese and many thousands were taken prisoners and taken to Burma. The Burmese cruelty and atrocities in their conquered countries was well known as they demonstrated it in Assam and Arakan. The population of Imphal valley was reduced to about 10,000 or about 2000 households only.

Burmese Administrative Arrangements

Initially two governors, Pakha wun and Kale wun were given the responsibility of administration of the conquered territory which was a deserted country. The Royal chronicle records that they administered over "empty and deserted countryside" Finding that they would not be able to administer Manipur directly, they found out Prince Jai Singh, a grandson of Satrugan Shai who was given a promise of being made the king of Manipur. He was arrested by Pakha-wun and was taken to Mandalay. Kalewun stayed back with 2000 soldiers to rule Manipur.

The Resistance Movement of Prince Herachandra

Herachandra, a son of the late king Modhuchandra started a guerilla war against the Burmese occupation force. He was staying in the Kuki

inhabited hills of the north. At that time the Burmese forces were kept into outposts at Thoubal and at Haobam Leikai in the capital. Herachandra gathered about 400 youngmen but they did not have enough equipments. Kale wun heard about the activities of the resistance movement. The Burmese took a great care to find out their camps. They could not get enough provisions to feed themselves. The people of capital area had already fled and there was no food. There was food in the countryside. Kale wun sent a group of five hundred Burmese soldiers to collect foodgrains from Moirang. Herachandra and his dedicated forces ambushed the Burmese soldiers and killed 200 and 300 fled. Herachandra looted some guns.

Meanwhile, Yumjaotaba or Yumjaoshana, elder brother of Herachandra came to Manipur. The two brothers met and Herachandra was given two horses, three guns and swords. At that time Herachandra had 50 horses, 12 guns and 400 men only. Yumjoataba met the Burmese Governor Kalewun who wanted his help in the suppression of Herachandra. Yumjaotaba got the confidence of the Kalewun by bringing food grains from Sekmai. Kalewun gave him 40 horse, 20 guns and 20 soldiers. Yumjaotaba joined the forces with Herachandra. The two brothers started the guerilla war in right earnest. Yumjaotaba made an encampment at Khomidok in the north Imphal. Herachandra proceeded to Kakching and defeated the Burmese outpost there killing 30 soldiers and then 30 guns were collected.

At that time Pakhawun returned from Burma with 1000 soldiers and a battle was fought between the Burmese and the Manipuri forces on the bank of the Thoubal river. Herachandra was defeated and the two brothers fled to Cachar.

Pakhawun and Kalewun returned to Burma by making one Huidrom Labol Singh a ruler of Manipur. He administered the country with the help of dacoits and nefarious elements.

Yumjaotaba (1820)

In the absence of the Burmese forces, the country was in chaos. Herachandra and Yumjaotaba returned from Cachar and occupied the capital. Yumjaotaba became the king and Herachandra was made the Yubaraj in 1820. Yumjaotaba was the first Manipuri prince to become the king during the period of the reign of terror under the Burmese.

Gambhir Singh (1821)

Gambhir Singh came from Cachar to Manipur valley and occupied the throne as Yumjaotaba and Herachandra left the capital. Gambhir Singh had to abandon the throne as there was extreme famine and could not administer the country. The Royal Chronicle says, "the price of paddy per basket (Sangbai) was 15 Lakha of sels. Then, the Burmese sent Jai Singh, the son of Satrughana Shai to be the king of Manipur. Gambhir Singh once again fled to Cachar. Jai Singh became the king in October, 1821. There was peace in the land.

Jadu Singh (1822)

Jai Singh was recalled and Jadu Singh, son of Bhadra Singh who was staying in Mandalay was appointed the king of Manipur. He was sent to Manipur with 50 horses, 2 elephants, 50 guns and two thrones. He returned to Manipur along with the Brahmin astrologers. He ascended the throne. The people were happy in the absence of the Burmese torture. He restored the religious places. Yet there was still acute scarcity of food, the price of paddy per Sangbai was 5 Lakha of sels. The king gave relief to the people. The country was still under populated. His son Raghav Singh who was staying in Cachar came to Manipur. Jadu Singh sent for his old father Bhadra to become the king of Manipur. However, Jadu Singh died at the young age of 35 years.

Bhadra Singh came to Manipur and was shocked to find his son dead. Raghav Singh who misbehaved with his grandfather, became the king at the age of 16. He fled to Ava when his grand father Bhadra Singh assumed his authority. Raghav Singh was taken by the Burmese to invade Cachar. Their mission was a failure and Raghav Singh returned. He surrendered to his grand father Bhadra Singh who pardoned him and made him the king under the suzerainty of the Burmese.

Raghav Singh (1823)

Raghav Singh was taken to Ava by the Burmese leaving the country under the charge of Kalaraj, the chief of the Bishnupriyas of Lamangdong.

Bhadra Singh (1824-25)

Bhadra Singh, the 70 years old prince became the king and ruled the kingdom for one year. Manipur was made the springboard for the repeated Burmese invasions of Cachar. Bhadra Singh could not play any major role in the liberation of Manipur which was a part of the First Anglo Burmese war 1824-26.

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1. J. Roy, *A History of Manipur*, Calcutta, 2nd Edn. 1973 p. 30
2. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, pp. 50, 52, 53, 55
3. Tushuk village cannot be identified now. But it might have been in western hill range. There is only one Kharam village named Kharam Palli which was protected by king Khagemba who is still worshipped as the presiding deity of the vilage. There is one inscription issued by King Chandrakriti in the nineteenth century regarding this village.
4. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 50.
5. Mutua Bahadur and Paonam Gunindro Singh, *Epigraphical Records of Manipur*, Vol. I, 1986 pp. 1-7.
6. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *A Short History of Manipur*, p. 115
7. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 56.
8. R.K. Sanahal Singh, *Manipur Itihas*, 1947, pp. 47-48
9. R.K. Jhalajit Singh *op. cit*, p. 121.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 60 Garibaniwaza ascended the throne on Wednesday, 23rd day of the month of Thawan, Sakabda, 1631 (August 1709). R.B. Pemberton (183) gives the date of accession as 1714. This erroneous date has been repeated by later writers, W. McCulloch (1859), James Johnstone (1896), Abdul Ali (1923) and E.A. Gait (1926)
12. Ningthouja geneology, quoted in Atombapu Sharma, Pakhangba, 1953, p. 115 shows that Charairongba's four wives were Nungthil Chaibi Makak Laikhombi, mother of Garibaniwaza, Hijam Chanu, mother of Khambangba, Thangjam Chanu, mother of Khamlang Panshaba and Manghai Atomba, Satpam Chanu, mother of Loiyumba.
13. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 44 "King Mayamba was born on Thursday 22nd day of the month of Poinu, 1612, SE (96, November)". It appears to be a later entry when the prince had already become the king.
14. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 49. "on 27, Inga 1618 SE King Mayamba's mother Nungthil Chaibi died." This entry perhaps was another later entry made during the reign of King Mayamba (Garibaniwaza)
15. M. Jhulon, Vijoy Panchali, part-1, 1936, pp. 59-60, records a popular tradition that Nungthil Chaibi who was predicted by the astrologer that her child would kill her husband, gave birth to Pamheiba, but for the fear of retribution, did not inform the king of the birth of the prince and kept him in hiding with the help of her father at Leishangkhang tribal village. Later on he was shifted to Makeng Thangal village. At the age of 11 or 13 years, after the death of his mother Nungthil Chaibi, Pamheiba was brought back to the palace by his father king Charairongba. He established Haomacha Loisang, a department of hill tribes.

N. Khelchandra Singh, Chada Laihui, p. 74 also records that Nungthil Chaibi was the mother of Thongnang Mayamba (Garibaniwaza); it is corroborated by Ningthourol Lambuba, p. 339. Vijoy Panchali, p. 65, Maichou Louremba Khongnangthaba in desperation proclaimed him to be a tribal descent. So the British authors point to the Naga origin of Pamheiba which is not correct. See J. Roy, pp. 31-32, "All sources point to his being brought up by a Naga chief in the midst of Naga society." See also R.K. J. Singh, p. 125.

16. P. Gunindro, *Manipuri Numismatic*, 1982.
17. O. Bhogeshwar Singh, *Sanamahi Laikan*, p. 61.
18. J. Roy, pp. 30-31
19. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 62.
20. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 347.
21. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 66.
22. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 367.
23. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, pp. 67-69, pp. 87, 107.
24. *Ningthourol Lambuba* pp. 349-54.
25. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 66.
26. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, p. 129; R.K. Sanahal Singh, p. 51
27. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 67.
28. R.K. Sanahal Singh, p. 51.
29. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 67.
30. R.K. Sanaha Singh, p. 52.
31. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 67.
32. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 350-51.
33. *Takhel Ngamba*, edited by Haodeijam Chitanya reproduced in R.K. Sanahal's collected works of Haodeijam Chaitanya, 1884 and Kh. Kaomacha, Manipur Ittibritta, 1934, Imphal.
34. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 73, *Ningthourol Lambuba*, pp.360-62. O. Bhogeshwar (ed) *Takhel Ngamba*, 1985. The reference to the number of both Manipuri and Burmese soldiers, the casualties, prisoners war booties is exaggerated.
35. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, p. 131.
36. *Ibid*, *Ningthourol Lambuba*, pp. 371-72
37. R.K. Sanahal Singh, p. 53, G.E. Harvey, *A History of Burma*, 1926, p. 208.
38. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, p. 131.
39. G.E. Harvey, *op cit*, p. 208
40. *Ibid*.
41. *Ningthourol Lambuba*, p. 367
42. Harvey, p. 209
43. *Ibid*.
44. *Ibid*.
45. See also, N. Khelchandra, *Ariba Manipuri Sahitya Itihas* and O. Bhogeshwar Singh (Ed.) *Takhel Ngamba*, Imphal, 1985
46. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 71
47. A.B. Sharma, *Pakhangba*, p. 166, the first Meitei converts Vaishnavism were Haobam Shelungba and his wife. Haobam Shelungba was a noble in the court of king Charairongba.
48. Consistent efforts were made by Panditraj A.B. Sharma that the ancient Meiteis were followers of vedic religion. See his *Hari Mayee* and *Pakhangba*. After him, M. Kirti has tried to prove that the ancient Meitei region was Hinduism. Perhaps, there are similarities in some redimentary aspects of rites and ritual but in philosophy and metaphysics there is no similarity between the two.
49. O. Bhogeshwar Singh, (Ed.) *Sanamahi Laikan*, Imphal, 1972, p. 47.

50. M. Kriti Singh, Religious Development in Manipur in the 18th and 19th centuries, 1980, p. 3 interprets that Sakshya Dharma means sentiment of friendship towards God and is a part of the school of Madhavarcharya of Vaishnavism.
51. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 66.
52. *Sanamahi Laikan*, p. 48.
53. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 69.
54. *Sanamahi Laikan*, p. 48.
55. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, p. 134.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Moirangthem Chandrasingh's speech in 1952 session of the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, quoted by R.K. Jhalajit, p. 134.
58. *Sanamahi Laikan*, p. 12.
59. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, pp. 71-73
60. *Ibid.*
61. J. Roy, p. 13, R.K. Jhalajit, p. 138
62. Khumanthem Kaomacha, *Manipur Ittibritta*, Imphal, 1st.edn. 1934 & 2nd edn. 1980 p. 68. The list of manuscripts supposed to have been burnt are listed N. Khelchandra, pp. 39-41.
63. *Pakhangba*. pp. 4-5
64. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 79
65. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 81.
66. *Sanamahi Laikan*, p. 50
67. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 74.
68. *Sanamahi Laikan*, p. 50
69. *Sanamahi Laikan*, p. 61.
70. P.Gunindra, Manipuri Numismatics, p. 14,
71. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 80
72. Chanam Hemchandra Khaba (ed) Meihoulol, 1984, p. 20
73. *Sanamahi Laikan*, pp. 59-60. See also Gangmumei Kabui, *Social and Religious Reform Movement in Manipur in the 19th and 20th centuries*, JNU Buletin, 1975.
74. *Sanamahi Laikan*, pp. 63-64.
75. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 74.
76. C.K., p. 81.
77. *Ibid.* p. 83.
78. *Ibid.* p. 86.
79. N. Khelchandra, (ed) *Phamlon*, 1987, Imphal.
80. Ningel inscription of Garibaniwaza reproduced in M. Bahadur and P. Gunindro Singh, *Epigraphic Records of Manipur*, Vol. I, 1986, p. 9.
81. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p. 63.
82. R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *op cit.* p. 138,
83. Manipuri chronicles use the suffix or title of Shai for all the sons of Garibaniwaza. British documents use the title of Shah. T.C. Hodson thinks that it was a Persian influence and it may be a corruption from Shahi. R.K. Jhalajit thinks that Sai was a corruption of Sain. Sai, Shah, Sain and Shahi might have originated from a single root. Many Hindu kings in India adopted the title of Shah. However, we use here only Shai as recorded in the chronicles of Manipur.
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85. M. Kaoba Singh, A History of Manipur 1709 - 1826, a Ph.D. thesis of Manipur University. R.K. Sanahal, Haodeijamba Cheitanya'gi Apunba Lairiksing, 1980, Imphal. O. Bhogeswar, Takhal Ngamba'a Literary History of War of Garibaniwaza and Burman, Tepperah, 1985, Imphal.

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91. *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p.106
92. *Ibid*, p. 107
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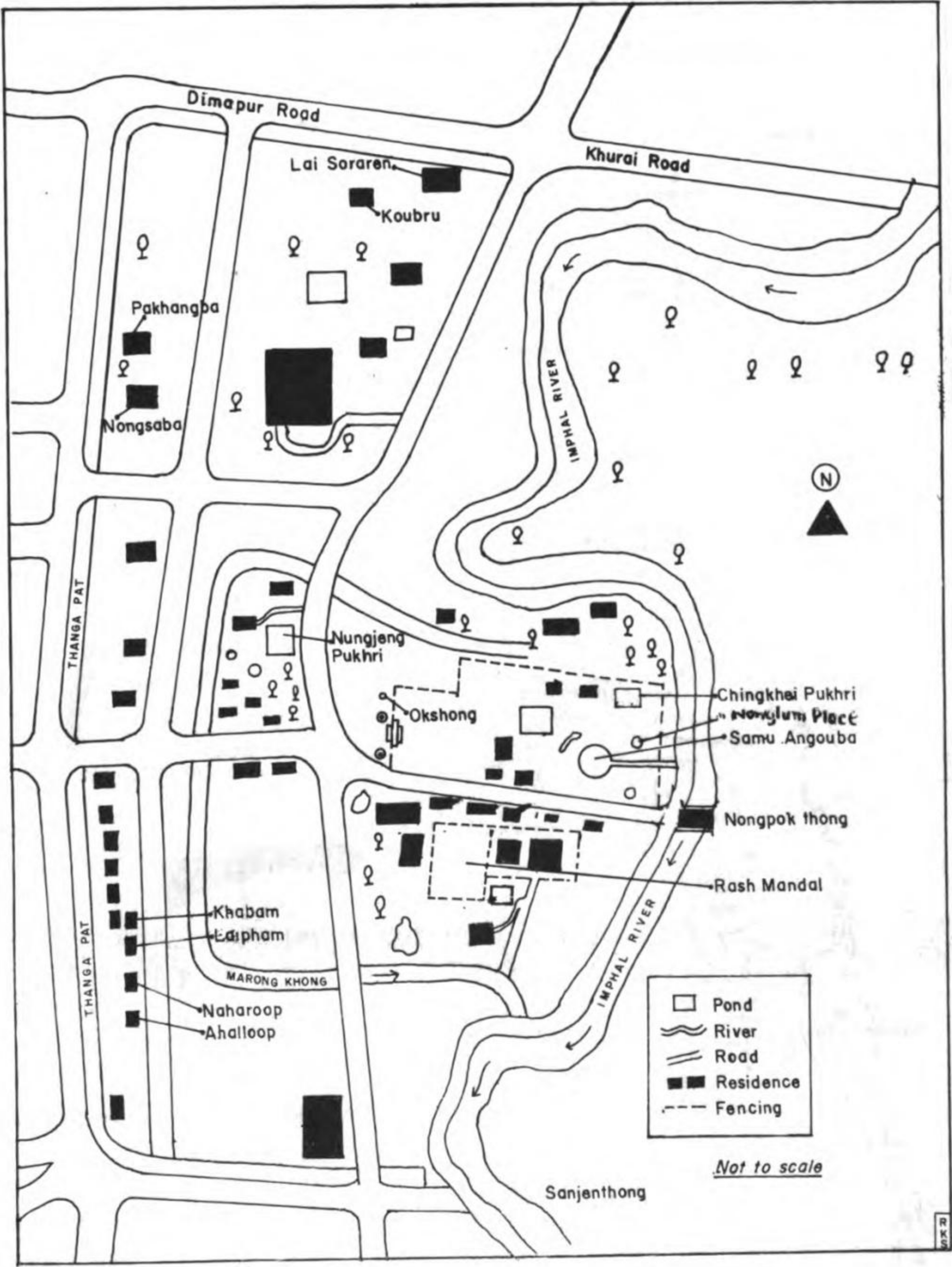
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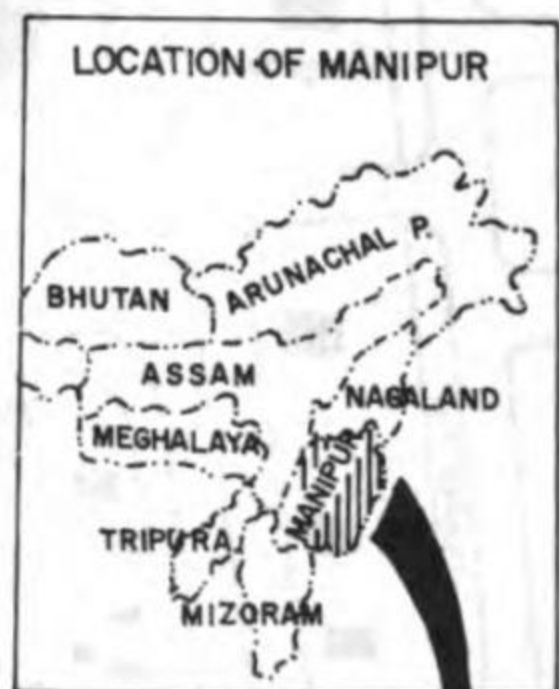
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MAP OF KANGLA



MANIPUR VALLEY CLAN PRINCIPALITIES

6 3 0 6 12 Km



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